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**THE PROPHET AND HIS  
PROBLEMS**



# THE PROPHET AND HIS PROBLEMS



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TO MY WIFE  
CATHERINE McKLVEEN SMITH

“The heart of her husband trusteth in her”



## P R E F A C E

THE Hebrew prophet has received a new interpretation at the hands of modern scholarship. Prior to its advent he was classified as belonging to an altogether unique species. He was neither of earth, nor of heaven, but had more or less tangible connections with both. He was a thing to be admired—yea, wondered at, but not to be understood. His mental and spiritual processes defied all analysis. He was an unfathomable mystery.

To-day the prophet is, in one sense, as much a mystery as ever; and he will remain so. Genius always eludes definition and exposition; and religious genius is no exception to the rule. But we have come to see that, after all, the prophet was a man among men. He was,

in essence, not differently constituted from other men. Nor was he vouchsafed a monopoly of the facilities for the discovery of truth and of God. This brings him nearer to us, and makes his experiences of primary interest for us, because they are seen to be such as, in kind at least, are common to men. They thus furnish illumination and direction to the modern man in his effort to know God more fully and to do his will more perfectly.

No section of the Old Testament, and but little of the New, comes so close to the needs of our day as does the prophetic literature. Reading it in the light of the conditions that produced it, we cannot but feel constantly the essential oneness of the prophet's problems with our own. They were struggling, and at times in the face of what seemed insuperable difficulties, to justify the ways of God to men. As time went on, these difficulties multiplied, rather than dimin-



ished. Old systems of thought and convictions of duty had to be abandoned, and new ones formulated in the heat of the conflict. Religion had to readjust itself from time to time to a new thought environment. To this task of reinterpreting the always changing phenomena of the world-life in terms of religion the prophet brought all his powers. Its successful achievement was the imperative need, if God was to be kept supreme in the thought of men. The perpetuation of Hebrew religious faith and its continued development in Christianity are proof of the prophet's success.

To a generation that sees many of the old strongholds of religion crumbling, and finds it necessary to seek surer foundations for new structures, the story of the Hebrew prophets should always prove interesting and helpful. They have much to teach those who are called upon to build after them. Their example of unblinking recognition of the facts of life

is a stimulus to right thinking, and their courage in the presence of tremendous odds inspires faith. Their experience seemed to involve much pain and loss. But on the contrary, this was in every way much gain. The old customs and dogmas that had to be dropped were but obstructing the way for the entrance of larger truth. The whole story spells progress. It cost much to learn the new truth; but truth paid its way then even as now. The truth proved to be no enemy to faith, but the enlarger and strengthener of faith.

This little book does not, of course, attempt to tell the whole story of prophecy. It aims rather to present a few illustrative sections of that story. Through these, it is believed, a general point of view regarding the prophet and his work may be attained. It is hoped that some who read these pages may be sufficiently interested and quickened to feel a desire to fill in the lacunæ by more detailed and

consecutive studies. Therefore, a list of books has been appended for those who may desire to go further and learn more. The prophetic writings yield rich reward for intelligent and faithful study. They show us Hebrew religion in the making and they point the way to God for all who would in like manner make their own religion.



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**THE PROPHET AND HIS  
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# I

## PROPHETS IN THE SEMITIC WORLD <sup>1</sup>

FOR a long time prophecy was looked upon as an exclusively Israelitish institution, as that which set Israel apart from all competitors in the sphere of religion. This point of view was inevitable as long as the opinion prevailed that Israel was "the peculiar people," isolated on every side from the world about her, having connection only with the God above her. But that opinion is now being retired into the ever more thickly populated limbo of outworn, outgrown, and forgotten dogmas. It is impossible for the historian any longer to treat the Hebrew nation as a thing apart. By birth the Hebrews were

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted, with revision and expansion, from *The Biblical World*, vol. XXXV (1910).

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members of the great Semitic family. Nothing pertaining to the Semite was wholly foreign to the Hebrew. Semitic blood flowed in Israel's veins; Semitic ideas rounded out her mental horizon; Semitic impulses and passions furnished the content of her emotions. Israel's whole social, intellectual, and spiritual background was through and through Semitic.

Not only so, but at one time or another in Israel's experience she was brought into vital contact with all of the great civilisations of antiquity. Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, all in turn made their contribution to Israelitish life and thought. The great outstanding and enduring feature of Israel's life was her willingness to borrow from her neighbours. No nation has manifested a greater openness of mind and heart. Yet there was nothing of slavish dependence in her attitude. She exhibited a

wonderful selective power in the things she took and in many a case her touch was transforming. It is now generally recognised that not a single institution of Israel's life was exclusively Hebraic. Quantitatively speaking, that which united Israel to the neighbouring peoples far outweighed that which differentiated her from them. Her pre-eminence was wholly in the sphere of quality and degree.

We are now prepared, therefore, for consideration of the proposition that prophecy was shared alike by all the Semitic peoples. If sacrifice, priesthood, temple, clean and unclean, circumcision, Sabbath, sabbatical year, atonement, fasts, feasts, sacred pillars, teraphim, blood-revenge, oracles, prayers, and psalms are all held in common by the Semitic world, why should we expect prophecy to form an exception?

The Old Testament itself furnishes no warrant for such an expectation but

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rather gives direct evidence of a contrary sort. Balaam, son of Beor (Num. 22 : 5), though a prophet of Yahweh (22 : 8), was yet quite evidently not a Hebrew, for he sought oracles to the detriment of Israel and for the benefit of Midian and Moab. Even the Philistines had "diviners" (I Sam. 6 : 2). The King of Babylon is represented by Ezekiel (21 : 21) as employing divination by means of arrows, teraphim, and the inspection of the livers of animals.

When we extend our quest beyond the Old Testament, evidence for the existence of prophets among non-Hebraic peoples multiplies.

In Assyrian religion, visions and oracles played an important part, constituting a "regular means of communication between man and the gods."<sup>1</sup> Oracles were sought by Esarhaddon, Ashurbani-

<sup>1</sup> M. Jastrow, Jr., *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (1898), pp. 338 ff. and 379. In the new German edition of this work (completed in 1912) three entire chapters, covering 833 pages, are given to the various kinds of divination.

pal, and the kings in general upon all sorts of occasions, public and private.<sup>1</sup> By means of them the kings sought from the gods guidance and light upon the outcome of their plans. The function of the seer, diviner, and soothsayer in Assyria, therefore, frequently took on national significance, thus being suggestive of Israelitish prophecy in its higher development. For example, when Ashurbanipal, after the capture of Babylon, propitiated the outraged gods by the purification of their shrines, it was done by direction of the guild of soothsayers. On another occasion, Ashurbanipal, just as he was setting out for a campaign against Elam, poured out his soul in supplication for aid to Ishtar, and later in the same night was comforted by receiving a revelation from her. As he himself tells the story:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. D. Gray's translations of some oracles of Esarhaddon in R. F. Harper's *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature* (1900), pp. 414 ff.

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Toward the end of the night in which I had addressed myself to her, a seer lay down and dreamed a dream; and Ishtar showed him a vision of the night which he related to me as follows: "Ishtar who dwells in Arbela entered with her quivers hanging down on the right side and on the left. In her hand she held a bow, and a sharp war sword she drew from its sheath and held before her. Like the mother that bore thee, she speaks with thee, she calls thee. Ishtar, the exalted among the gods, establisheth thy fate. . . . Whither thy face is set, thither go I. Thou didst say to her: 'Whithersoever thou goest, will I go with thee, O queen of the gods.' She replied to thee: 'Thou mayest stay here; where the shrine of Nabu is, eat food, drink wine, make music, and exalt my deity, until I go forth and complete that work and give thee the wish of thy heart. Let not thy countenance pale nor thy feet totter.' In her good mother-love she hid thee and protected thy whole body. Before her will a flame flash forth, and for the destruction of thine enemies will she cause it to go forth abroad. Against Teumman, King of Elam, against whom she is enraged, has she set her face."<sup>1</sup>

This narrative irresistibly calls to mind the corresponding scene when Ahab and

<sup>1</sup> See H. Winckler, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, vol. II (1890), pp. 251 f.

Jehoshaphat sought to know the will of Yahweh concerning the expedition against Ramoth Gilead and finally called in Micahiah ben Imlah (I Kings 22 : 4 ff.).

In connection with the revolt of Shammash-shum-ukin, King of Babylon and brother of Ashurbanipal, the following episode is narrated:

At that time a certain seer was lying asleep during the night, and he saw a vision, thus: On the disk of Sin (*i. e.*, the moon) there was written as follows: "Whoever plots evil against Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, and begins hostilities against him, I will send an evil death upon. I will bring his life to an end by the swift, iron dagger, the firebrand, famine, or the devastation of Gira" (*i. e.*, the pest god). I heard these things and I trusted in the word of Sin, my lord.<sup>1</sup>

A badly damaged text from Ashurbanipal's famous library has preserved a prophecy of the fall of Babylon which is especially interesting and instructive. The prophecy perhaps dates back as far

<sup>1</sup> See my translation of the "Annals of Ashurbanipal," in R. F. Harper's *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature* (1900), p. 108.

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as the fifteenth century B. C. and expresses the hope and confidence of Assyria regarding the fate of her rival Babylon. The intelligible portion of the inscription reads:<sup>1</sup>

In the conquest (?) of Babylon  
The builder of that palace will suffer harm (?):  
That prince will experience disgrace,  
His heart will not be glad.  
During his reign  
Fight and battle  
Will not cease.  
Under his rule one will devour the other;  
The people will sell  
Their children for money.  
The lands will all at once revolt (?);  
The husband will forsake the wife,  
And the wife will forsake the husband.  
The mother will bar her door against the  
daughter.  
The possession of Babylon  
Will come to Subartu  
And to Assyria.  
The King of Babylon  
Will to the prince of Assyria the property of  
his palace  
And his possession to. . . .

<sup>1</sup> This translation follows that of Ungnad, in Gressmann's *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum Alten Testamente* (1909), pp. 75 ff.



The Assyrian and Babylonian prophet, diviner, or soothsayer was always of the priestly class and connected with a shrine, therein differing, it is true, from men like Amos and Micah but, on the other hand, furnishing an exact parallel in this respect to a seer like Samuel, who combined in himself the functions of priest and prophet. In contrast with the higher reaches of prophecy in Israel, the prophets of Assyria and Babylon were, for the most part, caught in the meshes of sorcery, witchcraft, magic, and necromancy. So far as we at present know, they never dealt with the ills of the social order or presented themselves in behalf of the gods as ardent champions of the poor and the oppressed. But a new inscription may at any moment reveal them to us in a new and better light.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For other examples of Assyrian prophecy, see Peiser, *Mittheilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, III (1898), pp. 257 ff.; and C. H. W. Johns, "The Prophets in Babylonia," *The Interpreter*, April, 1906.

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Another close parallel to Old Testament prophecy is furnished us by the little kingdom of Byblos, in northern Syria. The time of the occurrence was about 1100 B. C. The occasion of the prophecy was an embassy from Hrihor, high priest of Amon at Thebes, to Zakar-Baal, prince of Byblos. The envoy Wenamon was commissioned to secure from Zakar-Baal sufficient cedar from the Lebanons for the building of a new sacred barge for the god Amon. After various delays and vicissitudes, Wenamon arrived at Byblos.<sup>1</sup> Here his ill fortune continued, for, having come in a merchant vessel instead of in a royal ship, and lacking the usual costly gifts and other credentials of an Egyptian envoy, he was refused recognition by Zakar-Baal and was ordered to return whence he came. Notwithstanding the fact that the order of dismissal was re-

<sup>1</sup> For the full story of the expedition, see J. H. Breasted's *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. IV (1906), pp. 274 ff.

newed every day for nineteen days, Wenamon persisted in remaining and urging his claim upon the refractory prince. At last, just as he was on the eve of re-embarking for Egypt, having already sent his baggage aboard and waiting only for the darkness that he might carry the image of his discredited god aboard under its friendly cover, he was requested to remain and was granted an interview by the prince, as a result of which he was able to carry through his mission to success. The reason for the sudden change of heart upon the part of the prince is told by Wenamon as follows: "Now, when he (Zakar-Baal) sacrificed to his gods, the god seized one of his noble youths, making him frenzied, so that he said: 'Bring (the god) hither! Bring the messenger of Amon who hath him. Send him and let him go.' " Thereupon, the King, profoundly impressed by this message, summoned Wenamon to his presence.

The points of resemblance between this episode and the activity of the Hebrew prophet are clear. There is the same ecstatic state which, as in Israel, is attributed to divine possession. Further, the prophetic personage is apparently not a priestly official of any sort but a man of high rank at the court, reminding us somewhat of Isaiah's position. Yet again the prophet does not fear to run diametrically counter to the royal will in bidding the King be courteous to a political representative whom he has thus far treated with the greatest discourtesy. Not only so, but the prophecy comes on the occasion of a national crisis, or at least it probably seemed such to the "noble youth." The prophet fears that the rude dismissal of the Egyptian envoy may involve Byblos in war with the great Egyptian Empire, for which he probably entertained a much greater respect and fear than did his master, Zakar-Baal. He broods upon

the danger of the King's course until he is impelled to speak words of warning in the name of his god and in behalf of his country. Here we approach very close to the heart of Hebrew prophecy.

Another proof of the activity of prophets in northern Syria is afforded by a recently discovered inscription of Zakar, King of La'ash and Hamath about 800 B. C. Zakar was attacked by a coalition of neighbouring kings and was in great straits. "Thereupon," as he himself says, "I raised my hands to the Lord of the heavens; then the Lord of the heavens heard me; [an oracle] the Lord of the heavens [sent] to me through the seers<sup>1</sup> and the . . . ; and the Lord of the heavens [said to me]: Fear thou not; for [I] made [thee] King; [I will stand] by thee and rescue thee from all [the kings who] have raised intrenchments against thee." Here again we

<sup>1</sup>The word here used is one often employed in the Old Testament to describe prophetic vision or utterance.

find "seers" exercising influence upon public affairs in the name of the gods.

The most striking parallels to Hebrew prophecy, however, come from Egypt. The oldest document of this sort so far known exists, in whole or in part, in five copies—a fact attesting its popularity. It has recently been placed within the reach of English readers by a translation from the hand of Alan H. Gardiner,<sup>1</sup> which is the source of our information here. King Snefru (*ca.* 2900 B. C.), after a meeting of his council, requested that some one be brought before him who could while away the time with interesting narratives. Thereupon, a priest of the goddess Ubast was produced, who proceeded to set forth the calamities that must befall Egypt. His opening words were: "Up my heart, and bewail this land whence thou art sprung." Contin-

<sup>1</sup> In *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, April, 1914. Gardiner's rendering is based upon the edition of the text by W. Golénischeff, viz.: *Les papyrus hiératiques Nos. 1115, 1116A, 1116B de L'Ermitage Impérial à St. Pétersbourg* (1913).

uing in this strain, he depicts the land as a prey to internal brigandage, to irruptions of Asiatic nomads, to drying up of the Nile, and to civil war. "I show thee the land upside down; the man weak of arm is now the possessor of an arm; men do the bidding of him who once did other men's bidding. I show thee the undermost uppermost. Men live in the Necropolis. The poor man will make his hoard. . . . The pauper eats offering-bread." But after this reign of terror there will arise a King the splendour of whose reign will atone for all past agony.

There is a King shall come from the South, whose name is Ameny, son of a Nubian woman, a child of Chen-Khou.<sup>1</sup> He shall receive the White Crown;<sup>2</sup> he shall assume the Red Crown;<sup>3</sup> he shall unite the Two Powerful Ones;<sup>4</sup> he shall propitiate Horus and Seth,<sup>5</sup> with what they love. . . .

<sup>1</sup> A name for Upper Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> That of Upper Egypt.

<sup>3</sup> That of Lower Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> The two goddesses who preside over the double crown.

<sup>5</sup> The two rival brother gods between whom Egypt had been divided.

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The people of his time shall rejoice; this man of noble birth shall make his name for ever and ever. Those who turn to mischief, who devise rebellion, shall subdue their mouthings through fear of him. The Asiatics shall fall by his sword; the Libyans shall fall before his flame, and the rebels before his wrath, and the froward before his majesty. The Uræus that dwelleth in front<sup>1</sup> shall pacify for him the froward.

There shall be built the wall of the prince, so as not to allow the Asiatics to go down into Egypt, that they may beg for water after their wonted wise, so as to give their cattle to drink. And right shall come into its place, and iniquity be cast forth. He will rejoice who shall behold and who shall serve the King. And he that is prudent shall pour to me libation when he sees fulfilled what I have spoken.

Another source of our knowledge concerning prophecy in Egypt is known as the Leiden papyrus No. 344. Though long studied by Egyptologists, the difficulty of the text, due to its illegibility, obscurity, and fragmentary character, was so great that not until the year

<sup>1</sup> That is, the serpent symbol worn upon the brow of the Pharaoh and believed to be likewise worn by the sun-god Re. Its function was to protect the King.



1903<sup>1</sup> was any true insight into the nature of its contents obtained, and even then much was left to be illuminated by further study. But in the year 1909 there appeared from the press a study of this document by Alan H. Gardiner, bearing the title *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs). This work, containing text, transliteration, translation, and introduction, is henceforth the *editio princeps*. It renders the text of the papyrus accessible and intelligible to all scholars. Few texts can be of greater interest or significance to the students of the Old Testament.

The date of the text is at present in large measure an open question. Sethe assigns it to the Hyksos period (*ca.* 1675–1575 B. C.), while Gardiner vacillates between this date and the period between the sixth and eleventh dynasties of Egypt (2475–2160). In either case, the

<sup>1</sup> H. O. Lange, "Prophezeiungen eines ägyptischen Weisen," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1903), pp. 601–610.

document comes from a period centuries earlier than the first known appearance of prophecy in Israel. The contents of the document make it evident that an individual named Ipuwer is represented as delivering a long and impassioned discourse in the presence of the King and his courtiers. What the occasion was that called forth this speech we do not know. He may have suffered some injustice which made him seem to himself to be the typical victim of an administration that was plunging all his fellow citizens into disaster and suffering, as Gardiner suggests, or he may have been called in by the King for advice; or, like Amos at Bethel, he may have gone to court voluntarily, driven by an inner conviction that was like fire in his bones. In any case, he hesitates not to lay bare before the eye of the King the terrible wickedness and consequent misery and disaster that confront the observant citizen on every side. The conditions he

describes may be suggested by a collection of some citations from his address:<sup>1</sup>

The [doorkeepers] say: Let us go and plunder. The washerman refuses (?) to carry his load. A man looks upon his son as his enemy. The virtuous man walks in mourning (?) on account of that which has happened in the land. The wrong-doer is everywhere. Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere. Crocodiles are glutted (?) with what they have captured; men go to them of their own accord. Forsooth, hair has fallen out for every one. Great and small say: I wish I might die. Little children say (?): He ought never to have caused me to live (?). Forsooth, all animals, their hearts weep. Cattle moan because of the state of the land. A man strikes his brother, (the son) of his mother. The roads are guarded. Men sit over the bushes until the benighted (traveller) comes, in order to plunder his burden. What is upon him is taken away. He is belaboured (?) with blows of the stick and slain wrongfully. Forsooth, grain has perished on every side. (People) are stripped of clothes, spices (?) and oil. Everybody says: There is none. The storehouse is ruined. Its

<sup>1</sup> The translation of A. H. Gardiner is used. It should be borne in mind that, unless otherwise mentioned, the sentences grouped together here and in the following citations do not follow one another closely in the papyrus, but are scattered widely throughout the document.

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keeper is stretched upon the ground. The poor man begs. . . . All is ruin.

One element in the situation that seems to overwhelm Ipuwer is found in the apparently almost complete subversion of the social order. This is depicted for us in the following language:

Forsooth, poor men are become owners of good things. He who could make for himself no sandals is now the possessor of riches. The wealthy are in mourning; the poor man is full of joy. Every tongue says: Let us suppress him, the powerful among us. Forsooth, the land turns round as does the potter's wheel. Good things are in the land, (yet) the mistresses of houses say: Would that we had something to eat. The builders of pyramids have become field labourers. The son of a man of rank is no longer distinguished from him who has no such father. The children of princes are dashed against the walls. Those who were clad in fine linen are beaten. He who was a (notable) does commissions himself. Noble ladies suffer like slave girls. All female slaves are free with their tongues. When their mistress speaks it is irksome to the servants. She who looked at her face in the water is possessor of a mirror. Poor men come and go in the great houses. The children of princes are cast out (?)

in the streets. He who knows says it is so. He who is ignorant says, No. He who does not know it does good in his eyes. He who could make for himself no coffin is (now) (possessor) of a treasury (?). He who never slept upon walls (?) is (now) the possessor of a bed. He who could not build himself a cell is (now) possessor of walls. The possessor of wealth (now) passes the night thirsting. He who begged for himself his dregs is now the possessor of bowls full to overflowing (?). The possessors of robes are (now) in rags. Behold the poor of the land become rich, and (the possessor) of property has become one who has nothing.

An extremely serious feature of the situation is indicated by Ipuwer's statements regarding the general disrespect for law. For example:

Forsooth, the splendid (?) judgment-hall, its writings are taken away. Public offices are opened and (their) census lists are taken away. . . . —[officials] are slain and their writings are taken away. The laws of the judgment-hall are cast forth; men walk upon (them) in the public places; poor men break them up (?) in the streets. Two things are done that have never been for long time past; the King is taken away by poor men. Behold a few lawless men have ventured to despoil the land of the kingship. The secrets

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of the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt are divulged. Behold, the judges of the land are driven out through the land.

One striking thing about the speech of Ipuwer is the fact that, like the prophets of the Old Testament, he apparently stands in no awe of his King but fearlessly charges him to his face with being himself responsible in large measure for the prevailing conditions. He addresses his King thus:

Taste, knowledge, and truth are with thee. Confusion is what thou dost put throughout the land together with the noise of tumult. Behold, one uses violence against another. People conform to that which thou hast commanded. If three men journey upon a road, they are found to be two men; the greater number slay the less. . . . It is because thou hast acted so (?) as to bring these things about (?). Thou hast spoken falsehood. . . . Would that thou mightest taste some of these miseries. Then wouldst thou say . . .

Apparently he charges the King with having been subservient to the will of the powerful regardless of the effect of

such proceeding upon the public welfare. Speaking to the King directly, he says:

To be ignorant of it is what is pleasant in their hearts. Thou hast done what is good in their hearts. Thou hast nourished people with it.

To add to the horrors of the situation, the land apparently is in the throes of a foreign invasion. Accompanying this condition of material and moral degeneration, it is not surprising to find that Ipuwer also discerns spiritual decay. Men are doubting the existence of God and acting as though he were not. "Forsooth, the hot-headed (?) man says: if I knew where God is, then would I make offerings unto him."

The unfavourable elements in this piece of literature when it is compared with the prophetic writings of Israel stand out in clear relief. A polytheistic religion lies behind all of Ipuwer's statements. Magic, at least when performed for legitimate ends, is accepted as commendable,



and an exposure of its secrets is deplored. As reparation to the gods for the sins of the land, the prophet prescribes ritualistic performances after the manner of Babylonia, rather than repentance and faith, as was the wont of the prophets of Israel. Ipuwer urges—

to fumigate with incense and to offer water in a jar in the early morning. Remember to erect flagstaffs and to carve stelæ, the priest purifying the temples and the god's house being plastered (white) like milk; (remember) to make fragrant the perfume of the horizon and to perpetuate bread-offerings. Remember to observe regulations and to adjust dates. (Remember) to remove him who enters upon the priestly office in impurity of body (?). That is to perform it wrongfully. That is corruption of heart (?).

Still further, it must be confessed that there is no ringing note of sympathy with the poor, such as glorified the prophecy of Israel. The Egyptian prophet's anger and sympathy are aroused, indeed; not so much, however, because the weak are oppressed as because the established or-



der of society is overthrown. Whereas the Hebrew prophet was the champion of the poor, the Egyptian is, in this case at least, the defender of law and order. It is unseemly in his eyes that the conditions should be reversed as they have been so that poor and rich have changed places.

Yet again, there is an almost total lack of logical order in this prophetic writing as it has come down to us. This, to be sure, is a fault shared by some of the Hebrew prophecies, but it is not a characteristic of Hebrew prophecy at its best. Repetition, irrelevancy, and abrupt transition are unpleasingly frequent in Ipuwer's discourse. This sort of thing compels us to raise the question whether or not modern scholarship has gone too far in its demand of the Hebrew prophets that they give us smooth and logical discourses.

Nor is there apparently any sense on Ipuwer's part of a divine commission.

He makes no claim to speak as the representative of the gods. Unless this be entirely due to the fragmentary character of the narrative from which several portions are lacking, it separates Ipuwer widely from the prophets of Israel. The very word prophet in its Hebrew home designated the bearer of that name as spokesman of Yahweh. Their influence with the people was largely due to the recognition they received of their right to declare the oracles of God.

While all this and more may be said in the way of unfavourable criticism, it is none the less true that the resemblance to Hebrew prophecy is remarkably close. The unflinching courage shown by Ipuwer in pressing home upon the King his responsibility for the disastrous state of affairs is parallel to Nathan's "Thou art the man." The entire absence of the ecstatic element and of everything in the way of fanaticism is suggestive of He-

brew prophecy at its best. The resolute exposure of the ills of society of which the narrative is full is in keeping with the very essence of Old Testament prophecy. Nowhere else in the Semitic world save in Israel, so far as we now know, was there anything approximating this study of society from the moral point of view.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, this capacity of the Egyptian to detach himself from the social state to which he belonged and to make the society of his day the object of his study is manifested here, in any case, centuries before anything of the same sort presents itself in Hebrew literature. Not only so, but it is quite evident that Ipuwer was not the first in Egypt to strike out new paths in social study. His work presupposes that of forerunners who have created a style and method for him. Here is a man who, like the prophets of Israel, dared to assume the atti-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. H. Breasted, "The Earliest Social Prophet," *The American Journal of Theology*, January, 1910, pp. 114 ff.

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tude of a judge toward his own generation which he weighed in the balances and found wanting. When we remember that this was the supreme function of the Hebrew prophet we at once see how important this point of contact between Egypt and Israel becomes. It is a fact that immediately raises questions as to the character and closeness of the literary and spiritual relations of the two peoples.

One more point of resemblance must be noted. It is found in the following portion of Ipuwer's discourse:

He bringeth (?) coolness upon that which is hot. It is said he is the herdsman of mankind. No evil is in his heart. When his herds are few, he passes the day to gather them together, their hearts being on fire (?). Would that he had perceived their nature in the first generation (of men); then he would have repressed evil, he would have stretched forth (his) arm against it; he would have destroyed their seed (??) and their inheritance. . . . Where is he (?) to-day? Is he sleeping? Behold, his might is not seen.

This passage has occasioned discussion among Egyptian scholars. Profes-

sors H. O. Lange, Ed. Meyer, J. H. Breasted, and others, claim Messianic significance for it, declaring it to be a prophecy of a coming prince who should rescue and heal his people, restoring Egypt to her old-time place of prestige and power. A. H. Gardiner, on the other hand, presents a strong case for the view that the language is to be regarded as describing the activity of the god Re, the creator and preserver of mankind. He it is who is the "herdsman of mankind" and might have "perceived their nature in the first generation (of men)" and might have brought the race to an end and so have avoided the existence of the present evil age. His return to his earth will restore peace and prosperity. Whether or not the speaker refers to a Messianic prince is uncertain, as a matter of fact; but it must be remembered that Egyptian mythology looked back to Re as the first King and that all succeeding kings

were "sons of Re." Hence the Egyptian Messianic King would inevitably be thought of as a reincarnation of Re and might thus be spoken of as present at the first origins of the race. Indeed, we recall that the book of Micah speaks of a coming Messiah "whose origins are from of old, from ancient time." It is to be noticed, however, as Gardiner reminds us, that Ipuwer does not *predict* the coming of the Messianic ruler but merely gives expression to his longing that such an one might appear. Whether or not the thought is concerned with an individual Messiah in the ordinary sense of the word, the context is too uncertain to determine. But it is perfectly clear that there is here presented a longing for the coming of a golden age such as that so gloriously depicted and so confidently predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the passage

<sup>1</sup> For other examples of Egyptian "prophecies," see H. Ranke's translations in Gressmann's *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder*, I, pp. 202-210. Cf. Ed. Meyer, *Die Israeliten* (1906),

quoted on pp. 17 *f.* is in form at least a prediction of a coming King, who shall bring prosperity. This shows that the power to predict was acknowledged, even if the prediction here should be one only in form.

Finally, what is to be said regarding the relation of Israel's prophecy to that of her neighbours? Certainly, they are not indebted to Israel for the gift of prophecy, for non-Israelitish prophecy antedates prophecy in Israel by centuries. On the other hand, are we compelled to say that Israel derived her prophecy in its earliest forms from her neighbours? There seems to be no more reason for such a supposition than for the ultimate derivation of any of the other Israelitish religious institutions from abroad. Prophecy seems to have been a native product in Israel as elsewhere in the Semitic world. Semites all alike

pp. 451-455; Maspero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt* (1909), pp. 228 *f.*; and Cheyne, *Two Religions of Israel* (1911), pp. 1-13.

apparently possessed the original endowment of the prophetic spirit. But in Israel this spirit yielded its choicest fruit. To what extent, if any, Israel was directly influenced by her neighbours in general and Egypt in particular in the development of her prophetic gift it is hazardous to say in the light of the present imperfection of our knowledge concerning the commerce of ideas in the Oriental world. It is very probable, however, that the prophets of Israel knew something of the activity of their fellows in Egypt. The only thing certain is that up to the present time no Oriental nation has produced anything approaching the purity and power of Hebrew prophecy. Israel's prophets excel even those of Egypt in the nobility and simplicity of their conception of God and in the lofty purity and contagious passion of their ethical ideals. Granting Ipuwer and his kind the benefit of all doubts, still they fail



to exalt ethics above ritual and to make it the supreme concern of the divine heart and mind. Here Amos and his followers stand without a rival.

## II

### PRIMITIVE HEBREW PROPHETS

To appreciate the Hebrew prophet at his best we must also see him at his worst. Prophecy did not make its first appearance in Israel full-grown. Behind the prophets of the classic period lay a long line of prophets of a lesser order. These earlier prophets, humbly preparing the way for their greater successors, remind us at many points of the prophets of Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia, Greece, and Rome. They all alike share in a common experience. The glory of Israel's prophets is that, coming up through this common experience, they were not content to abide there but passed on in

splendid isolation to better and diviner things.

In this chapter we shall be looking at the beginnings of prophecy in Israel. The best path to the understanding of a people or an institution is by way of its history. We cannot, within the scope and purpose of this volume, trace the history of prophecy from beginning to end, but we can at least "look into the rock whence (they) were hewn and to the hole of the pit whence (they) were digged." Fortunately we have, preserved in some of the older strata of the Old Testament, survivals of the older type of prophecy, and to these we now direct our attention.

The asses of Kish, a well-to-do farmer of Benjamin, had gone astray. Kish sent his son Saul with one of the servants to find them. After three days of fruitless search, Saul, fearing lest his father become alarmed by his long absence, proposed to return home. But

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the servant called his attention to the fact that they were at the home of "a man of God" of great reputation as an infallible soothsayer, and suggested consulting him regarding the lost animals. To this Saul assented, but reminded his servant that they had no gift for the man of God. The servant, however, removed all difficulty by producing "a fourth part of a shekel of silver" which might be given in return for the desired information (I Sam. 9 : 1-10). Aside from the fact that the "man of God" in question is Samuel and that apparently he was of only local reputation, being unknown to Saul, whose home was not so far away, the interest of this episode for us lies in the conception of a "man of God" evidently entertained by both Saul and the servant and manifestly the common view of the times. He is one to whom men go for the solution of their hard problems, which he by reason of his relations with the unseen world is thought to be

able to solve. But he must be paid for his services.<sup>1</sup> He is a "seer," gifted with "second sight." When Ahab and Jehoshaphat ask counsel of the four hundred prophets regarding the advisability of a campaign against Ramoth-Gilead (I Kings 22 : 5 *f.*) they are crediting the prophets with exactly the same kind of insight that Saul's servant attributed to Samuel. Such power to pry into the future or to discover that which is hidden and lost has been ascribed to prophets and seers the world over.

When Saul departed from Samuel, having obtained what he went for and a call to the kingship besides, he met a "company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery and a timbrel and a pipe and a harp before them," and prophesying as they came

<sup>1</sup> The same point of view appears in II Kings 8 : 8 *f.*, where Hazael is said to have taken a present with him when he went to consult Elisha in behalf of Benhadad; and also in I Kings 14 : 2 *ff.*, where Jeroboam's wife goes similarly prepared to consult Ahijah.

along; and "the spirit of God came mightily upon Saul and he prophesied among them" (I Sam. 10 : 5-10). This is suggestive of a Salvation Army procession or of a band of whirling dervishes. The prophets are prophesying *en masse* as they march along to the accompaniment of music. What sort of "prophecy" can it have been? Were they indulging in chorus singing? Or were they howling forth short phrases in unison, something like war-cries or campaign slogans? Or were they simply in a state of uncontrollable frenzy suggestive of a certain type of modern camp-meeting?

The fact that these early prophets lived and worked in groups and not as individuals finds further support in several passages. We at once think of the four hundred prophets called upon for oracles by Ahab and Jehoshaphat. We recall, likewise, "the company of the prophets prophesying" with Samuel at

Naioth in Ramah (I Sam. 19 : 20), the groups of prophets at Bethel (II Kings 2 : 3) and at Jericho (II Kings 2 : 5, 7, 15) who warned Elisha of the impending departure of Elijah, the band of prophets who were enlarging their quarters when one of them lost his axe head (II Kings 6 : 1-7), and the guild of the prophets at Gilgal for whom Elisha healed the pottage (II Kings 4 : 38-41). In this connection we may note that the term "sons of the prophets" is not to be taken too literally. The term "son" has a very wide usage in the Old Testament. It designates not only blood-relationships but in a very large number of cases a quality or characteristic. For example, "sons of the exile" = exiles (Ezra 4 : 1); "sons of strangeness" = foreigners (Gen. 17 : 27); "son of strength" = mighty man (I Sam. 14 : 52); "and Noah was a son of five hundred years" = was five hundred years old (Gen. 5 : 22). In the same way "sons

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of the prophets" are men endowed with the prophetic spirit, members of the prophetic group.

The use of musical instruments by these prophets is noteworthy. For what purpose was this music? Was it to furnish a suitable accompaniment to their poetic strains? Or was it to aid in arousing the prophetic passion? That the latter hypothesis is correct seems practically certain. In II Kings 3 : 6-20 we read that when Jehoram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah in their campaign against Moab came into difficulty they sought to learn the will of Yahweh through Elisha. Now, Elisha was not in the mood for prophecy just then; hence he said: "Bring me a minstrel." "And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of Yahweh came upon him. And he said, Thus saith Yahweh" (3 : 15 *f.*). The divine afflatus here was evidently superinduced by the strains of the music. We find some-



thing analogous to this in the use of music in certain of the religious exercises of the Mohammedan dervishes, which adds much to the nervous tension and greatly accentuates the high-strung emotions of the participants.<sup>1</sup> The use of music by David to soothe the troubled spirit of the insane Saul belongs in the same category.

It appears from all this that these early prophets were peculiarly subject to attacks of ecstatic frenzy and that this had much to do with their recognition as prophets. Mohammedan dervishes, by means of music, certain rhythmical breathing exercises, and other methods of self-incitement, produce a state of more or less ecstatic trance at will.<sup>2</sup> In groups of more or less extent, under certain conditions, the rapid spread of a state of feeling throughout a company is a well-known fact. Many a man carried away

<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. B. Macdonald, *Aspects of Islam* (1911), pp. 163 f.; cf. pp. 48-50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. D. B. Macdonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 93.

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by the psychology of the mob has done deeds of which he himself in isolation would have been incapable. But the mob spirit is contagious; it is difficult to resist its power. Exactly in the same way does prophecy seem to have been contagious. Saul, confronted by the procession of prophets prophesying, himself is seized by the prophetic spirit and joins their ranks.

A still more notable illustration of this contagion of prophecy is furnished by I Sam. 19 : 20-24. David had fled from Saul, who sought his life, to Samuel in Ramah. Saul sent a company of messengers to seize David and bring him to his presence. But David was surrounded by "the company of the prophets prophesying," and when the messengers saw them they, too, prophesied. This prophetic seizure befell three companies of messengers in succession. At last Saul went after David in person and he, too, fell a victim to the prophetic ecstasy in

that "he also stripped off his clothes and he also prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night." Few episodes reveal to us more vividly the crudeness of the religion of these early prophets and the limitations of their conception of God.

Two other facts point to the ecstatic character of early prophecy. The first is recorded in II Kings 9:1-13. Elisha sent "one of the sons of the prophets" to anoint Jehu King over Israel. The messenger found Jehu in the midst of a group of captains at Ramoth-Gilead. Calling Jehu apart, he fulfilled his mission and left. Upon Jehu's return to his friends they asked him: "Is all well? Wherefore did this mad fellow come to thee?" The prophet is thus classed by them as an insane person. The second fact is along the same line. In Jer. 29:26 the terms "mad" and "prophet" are coupled together in the description of men like Jeremiah. The ancient Se-

mitic attitude toward the insane was one of fear. It was due to the belief that such persons were the victims of spirits that had possession of their bodies and had established residence therein. "An evil spirit from Yahweh was upon Saul" and was held responsible for his fits of madness (I Sam. 16 : 14; 19 : 9). The New Testament belief that such unfortunates were possessed of devils (*cf.* Luke 8 : 27-40) shows how the ancient diagnosis persisted all through the centuries. A prophet also was one possessed. But whereas others might be possessed of demons, he was possessed of the spirit of God. A common way of describing the prophetic seizure was "the spirit of God came upon him" (I Sam. 10 : 6; 11 : 6; 19 : 19 *f.*, 23; *cf.* II Kings 3 : 15). The spirit of God in such phrases is evidently thought of as just as tangible, real, definite, and—we might almost say—concrete as were the spirits of another order which afflicted the insane.

This element of ecstasy due to seizure by the divine spirit was a trait common to all Semitic prophets, at least in the early stages of the development of the various prophetic orders. It is a part of the splendour of Hebrew prophecy that it so completely threw off the more crass conceptions and manifestations due to this belief. Never letting go of the fundamental and essential fact that the prophet was the mouthpiece of God, Hebrew prophecy at its best almost wholly repudiated ecstasy, trance, and fanaticism and abandoned all efforts to superinduce such experiences. An examination of the writings of the great prophets for phenomena of this sort warrants the statement that the greater the prophet was the less recourse did he have to such extraneous support for his message. In Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Deutero-Isaiah, with the exception of a few visions, experiences of an ecstatic order are conspicuous by their

absence.. The greatness of a religious experience may well be determined by the things that it discards.

If it be true that the early Hebrew prophets were as crude and primitive as the foregoing pages seem to imply, what could they contribute to the religion of their times? To answer this question we need to bring before our minds the situation amid which these prophets lived and laboured. Yahweh and Israel were strangers in a strange land. That land was already tenanted by other gods with their peoples. The Baalim and the Canaanites were there first. The task confronting Yahweh and his people was that of making good their foothold and enlarging their sphere of occupation and influence. This was an undertaking requiring time. The process was not in any sense completed until the reign of David; and even then much territory in the field of religion remained unsubdued. The relations between the resi-

dent Canaanites and the immigrant Hebrews were not uniformly, everywhere and always, the same. In some places and at some times there was a process of peaceful amalgamation, with the two peoples living side by side and learning each other's ways. In other places and at other times there was war to the death between the two. In either case the prophets of Yahweh were called upon to render invaluable service.

When peaceful relations prevailed, the danger to Yahweh and Israel alike was that they would be swallowed up in the life of Canaan, even as the captives from Samaria in 721 B. C. were lost in the life of Assyria. Nomads from the desert had everything to learn regarding the agricultural life of Canaan. The Canaanites themselves were, of necessity, their teachers. The civilisation of Canaan flourished under the banner of the Baalim. To learn that civilisation was to learn Baalism, too. The Baalim were



the gods of the land. Yahweh was an interloper. They supplied all the needs of the Canaanites; why should they not function in the same way for the Israelites? The processes of agriculture were under their auspices. What could Yahweh, the god of the desert, know about crops? If Yahweh is to preserve his hold upon the confidence of his people, he must take over to himself the function heretofore discharged by the Baalim. If the necessities of daily life are looked upon as gifts of the Baalim, Yahweh must inevitably fade out of the consciousness of his people. How real the problem was and how long the struggle between the opposing gods lasted is shown by the fact that this very question engages the attention of the prophet Hosea as late as the middle of the eighth century B. C.

Plead with your mother, plead;  
For she is not my wife,  
Nor am I her husband;



That she put away her harlotry from her face,  
 And her adultery from between her breasts;  
 Lest I strip her naked,  
 And set her as in the day of her birth,  
 And make her like a wilderness,  
 And set her like a dry land,  
 And slay her with thirst.  
 And her sons I will not pity.  
 For sons of harlotry are they.  
 For their mother has played the harlot;  
 She that conceived them has acted disgrace-  
 fully;

For she said, "I will go after my lovers,  
 Who give me my bread and my water,  
 My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."

. . . . .  
 And she did not know

That it was I who gave her  
 The corn, the new wine, and the oil;  
 And that I multiplied for her silver  
 And gold—which they used for the Baalim.  
 Therefore I will take back  
 My corn in its time and my new wine in its  
 season,

And I will snatch away my wool and my flax,  
 Which were to cover her nakedness.

(Hosea 2 : 4-7, 10 f.)

The early prophets met this danger at  
 its worst. They were stanch adherents  
 of Yahweh and stood unflinchingly for

absolute loyalty to him on the part of his own people. Over against the luxury and sensuousness of the Baalistic civilisation of Canaan, they set the simple and stern ideals of the desert. They opposed every step in the direction of civilisation as a departure from Yahwism toward Baalism. So, in the midst of a life that constantly threatened Yahweh with extinction, the prophets stood as the champions of a purer type of religion, striving to hand down "the faith once delivered to the saints" and to keep this primitive Yahwism pure and unspotted from the world of Baalism.

In so far as the efforts of the prophets were directed toward arresting the progress of civilisation in Israel, they were, of course, doomed to failure. The forces opposed to them were irresistible and in line with the eternal purpose. The primitive ideas of the desert could not meet the needs of those dwelling on farms and in cities. The narrow and undeveloped

life of nomads must be expanded and enriched before it would appeal to the culture of the world. The god of hunters and herders could never suffice for farmers and traders. Change and growth were indispensable to continued usefulness. But while the prophets were thus in part failures, they were in a larger measure gloriously successful. They acted as a conserving element. They kept matters from going too fast. They guided the movement in the right direction and did their part in making Yahweh and his will the dominating force in Israel. They stood for Yahweh as the supreme God and they refused to lend his sanction to acts of oppression, injustice, cruelty, and sensuality. In early days, therefore, the prophets laid firm foundations for the lofty ethical and spiritual conception of God, which later came to enrich the life of the world.

When friction set in between the Canaanites and Israelites, as it so often

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did, these early prophets proved the saviours of their people. Then it became necessary to arouse enthusiasm for Yahweh and to insist upon unswerving loyalty to him. The common adherence to Yahweh and the common need were the main influences in producing the measure of co-operation among the various Israelite groups that obtained in times of crisis. In leading the war propaganda the prophets were second to none. The existence of Israel was at stake and with it was involved the existence of Yahweh. The god and his people must stand or fall together. The wars of Israel were the wars of Yahweh. The activity of the prophets along these patriotic lines was hardly of less value than that of the military leaders. The interests of religion were here identical with the interests of patriotism and each reinforced the other.

An excellent illustration of all this is furnished by Judges 5, a poem reciting the

story of the last great military struggle between Canaanites and Israelites. The prophetess Deborah stands alongside of the general Barak. The victory is celebrated as a great triumph for Yahweh. The Israelites who "came not to the help of Yahweh, to the help of Yahweh against the mighty," are denounced and cursed; those "that offered themselves willingly" are praised and highly exalted. The contribution of Deborah in the way of stimulus to faith and courage was all that made the victory possible. Without her or some other similarly loyal and enthusiastic spokesman for Yahweh, Israel would have submissively endured oppression and ultimately perished from among the nations.

The labours of the prophets were of the same kind and of no less importance when struggles set in for the mastery of the land between Israel and neighbouring peoples, *e. g.*, Philistia, Moabites, and Aramæans. In the great struggle with

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the Philistines, the leading figure of the early stages was Samuel the seer and prophet. The relations between him and the "sons of the prophets" were evidently very close (I Sam. 19 : 20). It is significant that Saul, after leaving Samuel, came upon the band of prophets prophesying in the immediate vicinity of "the hill of God where the officers of the Philistines are" (I Sam. 10 : 5). It is not at all unlikely that their high-strung prophetic temperaments were stirred by the sight of the symbols of their country's shame; hence they broke out in prophecy. They may well have been flaming firebrands of war among the people. In any case, Samuel's great task was that of summoning Israel to the great struggle for its life and honour, and that of inspiring a leader capable of leading the disorganised and discouraged clans to victory. His service in this direction was so great that one source goes so far as to say that "the Philis-

tines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel: and the hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel" (I Sam. 7 : 13). At a later day, in the long, exhausting war with Syria, the services of the prophets in heartening king and people were worth battalions to Israel; see I Kings 20 : 13 *ff.*, 22, 28, 35 *ff.*; II Kings 3 : 10 *ff.*; 8 : 10 *ff.* In this connection, the estimate placed upon Elijah by Elisha is significant, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (II Kings 2 : 12); *cf.* the same judgment upon Elisha himself by King Joash (II Kings 13 : 14).

The ministry of the early prophets was thus eminently practical, in that it was precisely what was needed for the times. The prophets were rugged and intense men, crude in thought but vigorous and effective in action—the only kind of men that could be effective in

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such an age. Ignorant and narrow-minded as we should certainly regard them now, they were mighty instruments in the hands of God for the working out of his great purposes. Despise not the day of small things! Beginnings were here, as often, of apparently slight significance; but who can measure the glory of their latter end?



### III

## FALSE PROPHETS

THE term "false prophet" does not occur in the Old Testament. The idea, however, is present in such expressions as "the prophets prophesy lies . . . they prophesy unto you a lying vision" (Jer. 14 : 14); and "if a man walking in a spirit of falsehood lies" (Micah 2 : 11). The expression itself fell from the lips of Jesus according to Matt. 7 : 15 f.: "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing" (*cf.* Mark 13 : 22). The aim of this chapter is to discover the real distinction between such evidently great and true prophets as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah on the one hand and their opponents, the so-called "false prophets," on the other. Are the

latter all, without discrimination, to be grouped together and regarded as actuated by unworthy motives and as deliberate perverters of the truth? How could the contemporaries of the prophets distinguish the "true" from the "false"? Was there any "short cut" to the discovery of the truth in the days of the Hebrew prophets, but now no longer available?

We commonly read the prophets' utterances regarding their opponents without stopping to realise that what seems so clear and indisputable to us was not necessarily so to those to whom it was originally addressed. We accept the charge of falseness made by a Micah or a Jeremiah at its face value and never ask ourselves how the prophet in question could be so certain of his estimate or how the people who heard him could know whether or not he spoke the truth. There was no outer sign distinguishing the true prophet from the counterfeit.

It is not improbable, indeed, that in the early days, at least, prophets were marked by some kind of a brand, or shaved off the hair of the head in some characteristic fashion. In I Kings 20 : 35-43 an episode is related which seems to point to some outer sign upon the head or face which showed that a man belonged to the prophetic order; *cf.* especially vss. 38 and 41. But such outer credentials were, of course, available to both types of prophets alike; indeed, the possibility of "false" prophets being marked like "true" ones is clearly recognised in Zech. 13 : 4 *b*. Such an outer sign, in the very nature of the case, could have no weight in deciding the question at issue.

One of the most striking examples of "false" prophecy is recorded in I Kings 22. Ahab had summoned Jehoshaphat, of Judah, probably his vassal, to join him in an attack upon Ramoth-Gilead, then in the hands of the Syrians. Before

starting upon the campaign, in response to the suggestion of Jehoshaphat Ahab summoned the prophets of the kingdom to the number of about four hundred and inquired of them Yahweh's will regarding the enterprise. With one voice they said: "Go up, for Yahweh will deliver it into the hands of the King." Notwithstanding the fact that these were prophets of Yahweh (vs. 5) and spoke Yahweh's message, Jehoshaphat sought further testimony, and Ahab reluctantly called in Micaiah ben Imlah, saying: "But I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but disaster" (vs. 8). Micaiah, when pressed for the truth by Ahab, declares the message of the four hundred to be a lie and foretells the overthrow and death of Ahab in the contemplated campaign.

Here is courage, indeed! One man, in magnificent isolation, daring to assert his own interpretation of the divine will in opposition to the enthusiastic and

unanimous testimony of four hundred prophets as well accredited as himself. Furthermore, he does it at the cost of the royal displeasure. This is the stuff of which prophets are made! But, more striking still, he explains the message of his prophetic exponents. And his explanation is, to say the least, extraordinary. Summarily stated, it is to the effect that Yahweh had determined upon the downfall and death of Ahab. In order to give this decision effect, he had commissioned "a lying spirit" to go forth from his presence and control the utterance of all the four hundred prophets so that they might urge Ahab on to his end. It is at once evident that the moral responsibility for the lie rests upon Yahweh himself. The prophets are helpless; Yahweh, through his agent, has inspired them to tell a lie. What a flood of light a statement like this lets in upon the ethical standards of the prophets of the ninth century B. C.!

Micaiah's God was capable of strange and questionable things. Strictly speaking, if Micaiah's interpretation of their conduct be correct, the four hundred prophets are free from all blame. They are but unconscious tools in the hand of Yahweh. There is no warrant for branding them as deliberately "false." They were speaking what they sincerely believed to be the truth and nothing but the truth. Their hearts burned with patriotic pride and religious zeal as, in the name of Yahweh, they bade Ahab go forth to conquer. But it is doubtful whether or not Micaiah gave the four hundred the full benefit of his theory. It is hardly likely that he imputed to them the same sort of sincerity of motive and loyalty to truth as possessed his own soul. His "lying spirit" rather represents two convictions, viz.: (1) that the oracle of the four hundred was untrue, and (2) that the whole programme was ordained of

Yahweh. The old problem of the free will of man *versus* the sovereignty of God is raised by this explanation of the attitude of the opposing prophets, but Micaiah was not concerned with such abstract things. The fact that Yahweh had willed that the four hundred should lie probably did not in Micaiah's mind constitute any excuse whatsoever for their action. He would none the less vigorously denounce them as liars.

If we give Micaiah ben Imlah credit for having thought through the question of the sincerity of the four hundred prophets, we are compelled to conclude that he acquitted them of all intention to deceive. Whether he did or not, we must find for ourselves a satisfactory explanation not only of their attitude but also of that of the so-called "false" prophets as a class. In the search for this we must bear in mind certain facts. First of all, the prophets as a class at times certainly bore an unenviable repu-



tation for self-seeking. Amos, for example, when he went upon his prophetic mission to Bethel, was charged by Amaziah, the priest, with being actuated by unworthy motives (Amos 7 : 12). Amaziah's statement, being interpreted, amounts to this: "What mean you, O Amos, by coming to Bethel, the seat of the King's palace and the royal chapel, with a message announcing the imminent downfall of the monarch? If you wish to fill your pockets and your stomach, as most of your class do, this is not the kind of oracle to bring here. Take it down south to Judah. They will appreciate it there and pay you well for it. But there is no market for your wares here." The significant thing here is that Amos practically acknowledges the legitimacy of this characterisation of the prophets as a whole, for he does not take pains to deny it. He contents himself with repudiating the accusation of being a member of the prophetic or-



der himself. Whatever may be true of "prophets," he cannot be held responsible for it, for he is not a "prophet" but a shepherd and cultivator of fruit-trees. There are prophets and prophets, and Amaziah has mistaken his man. A similar judgment to that of Amaziah's is passed upon the common run of prophets by Micah the Morashtite (3 : 5). They are docile and amenable as long as they are well fed, but woe to him who refuses to be blackmailed by them. Zech. 13 : 2 ff. reflects a like opinion of the prophetic order in the postexilic age. But, while we may grant that many of the representatives of prophecy were unworthy of their profession and guilty of all with which the great prophets charged them, we must guard ourselves against condemning indiscriminately all those who opposed the true "prophets" and against supposing that it was an easy matter to tell the "true" from the "false."

Amos was himself misunderstood and misrepresented at Bethel. He and his compeers may at times, either in whole or in part, have misjudged others. It is by no means clear that the interpretations of their opponents' motives by men like Jeremiah and Micah were always absolutely correct. They had no magic mirror revealing to them the inner thoughts and purposes of their contemporaries and were therefore not immune against error in judgment. If the prophet at his best could not be an infallible judge, how much less could the people at large be so regarded? Indeed, how were the people, who after all were the ones most vitally concerned, to know when they were being told the truth and when a lie? This was a vital question in Israel on many an occasion; upon the right judgment in a given situation frequently depended the fate of the nation. The Israelites themselves fully realised the importance of this question

and sought earnestly for the right answer. We have on record two attempts at an answer.

When discontent and revolt were rife in Jerusalem in the years immediately following the first deportation to Babylon, two policies were struggling for the mastery. A typical illustration of the situation is given in Jer. 28. Jeremiah represented the view that Babylon was destined to remain mistress of the Oriental world and that the only thing that could wisely be done was to submit without struggle to her yoke. This was Yahweh's will. Such an attitude seemed to Hananiah the prophet and the many who supported him to be not only unpatriotic but also disloyal to Yahweh. It showed a lack of confidence in Yahweh's goodness and power. Inspired by a fanatical faith in his God, Hananiah, therefore, prophesied: "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the King of

Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Yahweh's house, which Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jehoniah, the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to Babylon, says Yahweh; for I will break the yoke of the King of Babylon."

This was in direct and open opposition to the preaching of Jeremiah. Which of the two should the people believe? Should they continue to pay tribute to Babylon, accepting their misfortune and disgrace as the expression of Yahweh's will; or should they flout the Babylonian and defy him, trusting to the love of Yahweh for his people and to his omnipotence. The latter policy, on the face of it, seemed much more religious than that of Jeremiah. For guidance toward the right decision in such a dilemma as this Jeremiah

makes an appeal to history. He first of all expresses his deep sympathy with the hopes of Hananiah, implying, however, that they were doomed to disappointment. Then he continues: "Nevertheless, hear now this word which I speak in thine ears and in the ears of all the people: the prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied against many countries and against great kingdoms of war, and of calamity, and of pestilence. The prophet who prophesies of peace—when the word of the prophet comes to pass, then shall the prophet be known, whom Yahweh has, indeed, sent."

This answer of Jeremiah's is positive but naïve. He virtually says: "If you survey the field of prophetic history, you will find that all the prophets of former generations have prophesied along the same general lines as I myself am now following. The burden of the prophetic message has always been disaster

and doom. I am no exception to the rule; I am in the line of prophetic succession. When a prophet appears, like our friend Hananiah, who preaches prosperity, I advise you not to be too quickly influenced by his words. The chances are all against him. Wait and see whether his predictions come to pass before you commit yourselves to his programme. That is the only way to keep on the safe side." If Jeremiah's interpretation of history was right, what about Messianic prophecy? Or shall we say there was no Messianic prophecy until after his time? Or must we conclude that Jeremiah's historical method was at fault, that he picked out from history the facts that accorded with his own views and ignored the rest? In any case, Jeremiah's test of prophecy was of little practical value. Its adoption would have meant the complete rejection of all counsels of hope until they were no longer needed.

Another answer to our question, of very similar character, is given in Deut. 18 : 15-22. The legislator here is warning Israel against trusting in "false" prophets. He anticipates their question and answers it thus: "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh has not spoken: the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him." This test of the truth of a prophet's message could be applied only when it was too late to be of any direct value. That prophet is the true one whose message is vindicated by the subsequent course of events. But the function of the prophet was to aid and direct in the determination of the course which events should take. The only test of any value from this point of view would be one that could be



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applied at once. The nation must act, one way or another, at once. Which policy shall it pursue? In many cases not to act is in itself a decision. Of what use in such a crisis is a test that applies only when the crisis is past and the results of the decision made at the critical moment are apparent to everybody? Certainly neither Jeremiah nor Deuteronomy furnished the kind of a test that could be depended upon in a case of need. There seems to have been no way of distinguishing beforehand between "true" and "false" prophets.

Not only so, but in the light of history we must ask ourselves whether or not the "true" prophets were always "true"? The fact is that those who received the indorsement of the ages did not always agree among themselves. The revolt of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam, if not instigated and supported by the prophets, was at least



approved by them; cf. I Kings 11 : 29 ff. But Hosea, looking back across the centuries and seeing the outcome of the revolt, condemns it and hopes for the healing of the schism thereby created (Hosea 1 : 11; 3 : 5; 8 : 4 [?]). In the days of Sennacherib's invasion both Micah and Isaiah were interpreting the situation.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to determine the course of Isaiah's thought in this crisis. Conflicting reports of his views seem to have been recorded; see pages 160 ff. But Micah's attitude is clear and pronounced. Dwelling on the countryside and looking upon Jerusalem as the embodiment of the sin of Judah, he says, probably in connection with this campaign: "Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem will become ruins, and the mountain of the house a high place in a forest." Micah was mistaken about the

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 19 ff. of my *Micah*, in the *International Critical Commentary* (1911).

fate of Jerusalem; but who would think of calling him a false prophet? The contemporaries of the invasion had contradictory views regarding its outcome urged upon them. To which should they hearken, and how were they to know the right decision?

In the light of the foregoing, it is plain that the hearers of the prophets had to make their own decisions regarding truth and error. They had no short cut to the truth but had to seek for it with struggles and tears, even as we do to-day. The prophets were thus dependent for the success of their prophecy upon their audiences, just as modern preachers are. They had no way of convincing men of the truth that is not open to the modern prophet. They could not and did not enforce their teaching by any external authority. The power of their message lay in its appeal to the hearts and minds of those to whom it was addressed. Truth was

self-authenticating in their age even as in our own. It must find its way into the minds of men as a welcome guest, else it will not enter at all. Its only credentials are its own inherent worth. The man who cannot or will not recognise its value for himself will never know the truth by any other token. The prophets, therefore, like all heralds of the truth, were perforce content to send forth their message by spoken word and printed page and trust it to do its own work in the lives of men.

The fact that religious truth is independent of and cannot be attested by outer demonstration, even of the most extraordinary kind, was, at least in part, recognised by the prophetic teachers of Israel. This is shown by Deut. 13 : 1-5. Here Israel is warned against accepting religious teaching that does not accord with what she has already learned of Yahweh, even though such false teaching be supported by signs and wonders

that actually come to pass. Even a miracle cannot validate a lie. This warning is the negative side of the proposition that the only test of truth is found in its fellowship with truth already known. The truth demonstrated in Israel's experience was that Yahweh was God. Any doctrine setting forth new gods was in irreconcilable conflict with this and was of necessity false. Nothing could show it to be true. Signs and wonders are not safe guides.

In the last analysis what was the real difference between the "true" and the "false" prophet? It certainly was not that the one was sincere and honest in his utterance and the other was deceitful, hypocritical, and deliberately given over to lies. Undoubtedly, some representatives of the prophetic order did abuse their office, treating it as a means for self-enrichment and self-aggrandisement. The world has never lacked those who were willing to use a high calling

for base ends. But as one listens to the utterances of Hananiah, the son of Azzur, and men like him, their words ring true. They believed what they said with heart and soul. They were as patriotic and as religious as the "true" prophets who opposed them. They did not need to yield an inch in loyalty to country and in loyalty to Yahweh to any man. The "true" prophets, to be sure, called them bad names, but theological and ecclesiastical partisanship, even in Christian times, has not been lacking in bitterness; *odium theologicum* is a synonym for acrimony and abuse.

The true ground of distinction is to be found in the attitude of the two parties toward the problems of their day. The one group was essentially traditionalistic in its attitude toward life. It was content to know how the fathers had thought and acted. What was good enough for former generations was good enough for the present genera-

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tion. They were for ever harking back to the faith once delivered unto the saints. They worshipped the past and had no true appreciation of the significance and value of the present. They lacked the creative spirit and power. They were engaged in the task of perpetuating old views and customs after these had outlived their usefulness. They looked upon the spokesmen of new ideas as irresponsible innovators and foes of the common weal; and they themselves were, in turn, reckoned disloyal to the truth and behind the times by their more clear-sighted and aggressive rivals for the religious leadership of Israel.

The "true" prophets, on the other hand, were diligent students of their own times. They were not lacking in appreciation of the past, but they did not allow the past to annihilate the present. They realised that Yahweh had spoken to the men of former ages great, creative truths; but they were equally

certain that he had still more truth to make known to his children. They held themselves in readiness to receive it, and they believed themselves commissioned to proclaim it. They knew that Yahweh had met the needs of the past with a message adapted thereto, and they were convinced that he was in like manner revealing himself in response to the needs of the present. They read the message of Yahweh in the events of the day as an ever-growing and expanding revelation. They were quick to see new obligations or duties arising in the development of the social and economic order and they did not hesitate to identify these demands with the will of Yahweh. Religion thus became in their hands a constantly enlarging experience; its demands could not be met by the mere repetition of ancient formulas; or by the performance, no matter how zealous, of an established ritual; or by the discharge of traditional



duties. It must be a vital thing, keeping pace with all the interests of the ever-changing world and making its ever-fresh contribution to the changing needs of man.

The difference between the "true" and the "false" prophet may be illustrated by setting forth briefly the main features of the situation in Israel in the eighth century. The reign of Jeroboam II had brought to Israel a high degree of prosperity. To the great mass of those who had profited by this prosperity and to most of the contemporary prophets this state of affairs meant that Yahweh was satisfied with Israel and was, therefore, showering blessings upon her. They rejoiced in their wealth and success and gratefully multiplied offerings to Yahweh in acknowledgment of his favour. They hoped for the day of Yahweh to come; then Yahweh would crown all his efforts in Israel's behalf by overthrowing all her foes and setting



her in authority over them. To all fearful and less trustful souls they said confidently: "Is not Yahweh in the midst of us? No disaster can befall us" (Micah 3 : 11). They regarded Yahweh's interests as identical with those of Israel. They judged Yahweh by the standards they set up for themselves. They were zealous in their worship of him and well satisfied with their standing in his sight. Were they not doing all that could be demanded? Was not their very prosperity itself convincing evidence of Yahweh's indorsement of them and their ways?

But there were others, like Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, who had a totally different conception of God. They believed him to be more interested in justice than in sacrifice, in honesty than in festivals, in worthy deeds than in empty words.

Let justice roll down as waters,  
And righteousness as a mighty stream.

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They held him to be so tremendously concerned about ethics that he would not hesitate to destroy an unethical nation. They conceived of his interests as embracing the world and thus made him independent of his people Israel. In his name they denounced the commercial dishonesty and the grasping greed that had taken hold of the hearts of the men of Israel. They demanded a new social spirit adequate to the new situation. They passionately pleaded for the rights of men as over against things, and claimed Yahweh as the avenger of the wrongs of the oppressed and exploited poor. In view of the travesties of justice which they saw on every hand, they could see no future for Israel but disaster and doom at the hands of God.

In the larger life of that eastern world in which Israel was becoming more and more deeply involved, the religious need for Israel was the formulation of a new

and larger idea of God. To this the prophets of traditionalism were not equal. They had neither the intellectual acumen nor the spiritual insight adequate for such a task. It called for men of broader human sympathies and deeper spiritual life. They could neither meet the need of the age nor recognise its existence and were thus well content to let things go along as they always had done. They were staunch defenders of the old, because they were totally unable to appreciate the new.

If this diagnosis of the situation be along the right lines, it will at once follow that there was no sharp dividing line between "true" and "false" prophets. Some were by temperament and training better able to seize the truth than others. Each, to the best of his ability, sought to interpret the age in which he lived in terms of religion; one succeeded in larger measure than the other. Each served his God with all

his heart and soul; but one made a larger contribution to the religious thought and life of men than the other. In his lifetime the great prophet did not always receive as much consideration and honour as the little prophet; but time vindicated him and placed the seal of its approval upon his words. With few exceptions, the prophetic literature which has survived the test of time is that produced by the great outstanding figures in the history of Hebrew religious thought. Their great sayings did not fail to find some appreciative hearers who treasured them in their hearts and passed them on to later generations. Men have never been willing to let truth perish. They can always be trusted with it and will not fail, sooner or later, to enthrone it in their hearts. The true prophet is always sure of a hearing, for the hearts of men instinctively respond to a message that comes from God.

## IV

### PROPHETIC PREDICTION

It has come to be a commonplace that the primary function of the Hebrew prophets was not that of foretelling. The older view which made them little more than recorders of history before it had taken place was a gross misinterpretation. The word "prophet" itself carries no such significance as "foreteller." In its Greek form, the immediate ancestor of our English word, it means "one who speaks for, or in behalf of, another"; *i. e.*, of course, "one who speaks for a god." The Hebrew word, of which this is a translation, is not wholly clear in its significance. But probably, like its Assyrian equivalent, it is best rendered "speaker" or "pro-

claimer.” Certainly, in certain passages of the Old Testament, the meaning of “prophet” is made fairly clear; he serves as the *spokesman* of Yahweh. In Jer. 1 : 9, Yahweh says to Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”; cf. Deut. 18 : 18. In Ex. 4 : 10–16, a relatively old passage (= J), Yahweh is represented as saying to Moses: “Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt speak.” Moses is still hesitant; hence Yahweh continues: “Is there not Aaron, thy brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And further—lo, he comes forth to meet you, and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do. And he shall be thy *prophet* (= spokesman) unto the people: and it shall come to pass that he shall be to you a mouth

and you shall be to him as God"; *cf.* also the account, Ex. 7 : 1. The prophet, then, from the point of view of these passages is the one who declares unto men the will of God.

The interpretation of the will of God might conceivably pertain to the history of the past; and certain prophetically minded men gave themselves, indeed, to the task of interpreting the past in such a way as to obtain therefrom warning, guidance, and inspiration for the present; witness the J and E documents of the Hexateuch and the stories of Judges and of Samuel which are made to drive home the lessons of prophetic teachers. Yahweh's will for the present is, however, a matter of more vital importance; and to this the great prophets of the classical period of Hebrew literature gave themselves with undivided energies. But the will of Yahweh regarding the future was also a matter of profound concern; and at no stage

in the history of prophecy was it ignored. Of the earlier days of Hebrew prophecy it is probably safe to say that the chief concern of the prophets was with the future. Oracles by lot, by omens, by trances and dreams were eagerly sought and highly treasured. The best possible attestation of a prophet's authority was the fact that "whatsoever he says comes to pass" (I Sam. 9 : 6). This was proof positive that he knew the mind of God.

That such attempts to read the secrets of the future have been made the world over is well known; and that they have, at times at least, been successful there is no sufficient reason to doubt. Bear with a case or two by way of illustration. E. W. Lane, in his edition of the *Arabian Nights*,<sup>1</sup> says: "To-day [November 6, 1834], as I was sitting in the shop of the Báshà's booksellers, a reputed saint whom I have often seen here

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I, pp. 210 f.



came and seated himself by me, and began, in a series of abrupt sentences, to relate to me various matters respecting me, past, present, and to come. He is called the sheikh Alee-el-Leysee. . . . 'O Effendee,' he said, 'thou hast been very anxious for some days. There is a grain of anxiety remaining in thee yet. Do not fear; there is a letter coming to thee by sea that will bring thee good news.' He then proceeded to tell me of the state of my family, and that all were well excepting one, whom he particularised by description and whom he stated to be then suffering from an intermittent fever. This proved to be exactly true." Again, Lane says of the same man: "He several times accosted me in an abrupt manner, acquainted me with the state of my family in England, and uttered incoherent predictions regarding me, all of which communications, excepting one which he qualified with 'if it be the will of God,' I must

confess, proved to be true." When Cyrus the Younger was upon his famous march against his brother Artaxerxes, and was daily expecting an attack from the latter, he was told by Silanus, the soothsayer of Ambracia, that Artaxerxes would not join battle within the next ten days. Cyrus promised Silanus three thousand darics if his prediction proved true, and on the eleventh day after the prediction was uttered, Cyrus paid the money over to Silanus in accordance with his promise.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-summer of 1908 a religious fanatic, belonging to the order of "Nazarenes," went up and down the streets of Messina proclaiming: "Be warned, take heed, and repent, O men of Messina. Before this year shall end, your city shall be utterly destroyed." The earthquake wiped out the city on December 28 of that year.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Xenophon's *Anabasis*, bk. I, close of chap. VII; cf. also *Thucydides*, bk. II, chap. LIV.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Knudson, *Beacon Lights of Prophecy* (1914), p. 76.

One of the best modern illustrations of this power of prediction is furnished by the life of Savonarola. His wonderful influence was, in part, due to the possession of this strange gift. For example, he foretold the deliverance of Charles VIII at a time when his retreat seemed cut off on all sides. At the very height of his own power, he had a premonition of his own fate and predicted his martyrdom. On May 26, 1495 A. D., he said to King Charles: "Remember that I repeatedly announced your descent into Italy when it was expected by none. I have predicted your success, predicted your perils. The Lord has punished you because, departing from his commands, you have abandoned his works. And still heavier punishments await you if you return not to the right path." In September, 1496 A. D., this threat was terribly fulfilled by the death of the Dauphin.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Villari's *Vie de Savonarola* (1893), vol. I, pp. 186, 309; vol. II, pp. 4, 42, 56, 90.

The Old Testament, too, records cases of this sort. A man of God tells Eli that his two boys will die on the same day, as they actually did (I Sam. 2 : 34; 4 : 11). Samuel tells Saul that the lost asses have been found (I Sam. 10 : 2). Micaiah ben Imlah predicts disaster for Ahab (I Kings 22 : 28). Amos foretells the disgrace and slaughter of the family of Amaziah the priest and the exile of Amaziah himself (7 : 17).<sup>1</sup> Isaiah predicts the downfall of Ephraim within sixty-five years, if the text be correctly preserved, which is not probable (7 : 8).<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah is said to have foretold the death of his opponent Hananiah the prophet within the ensuing year. Hananiah died within about two months (Jer. 28 : 16 *f.*). Ahijah the Shilonite

<sup>1</sup> However, we are not informed regarding the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this prediction. It is possible that Amaziah survived till the exile of Gilead and Naphtali in 732 B. C., but it is hardly probable.

<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, the final overthrow of northern Israel occurred in 732 B. C., only twelve or thirteen years at most after the time at which the prediction was made.

is said to have foretold the exact moment of the death of Jeroboam's son, Abijah (I Kings 14 : 12, 17). Elisha is said to have predicted the death of Benhadad of Syria and the consequent accession of Hazael, his murderer (II Kings 8 : 10-15). The mention of Cyrus in Isaiah 44 : 28 and 45 : 1, which used to be taken as a prediction, is now understood to be the utterance of a contemporary, since Isaiah 40-66 are recognised as exilic and postexilic literature. A prophet's prediction of King Josiah as the destroyer of the altars set up by Jeroboam (I Kings 13 : 1 f.), nearly three hundred years before Josiah's birth, is also now seen to be the product of a writer living during or after Josiah's own age.<sup>1</sup>

Were we to accept uncritically every one of the predictions of this sort contained in the Old Testament, the number

<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., the commentaries on *Kings* by W. E. Barnes (*The Cambridge Bible*) and J. Skinner (*The New Century Bible*).

would be relatively very small. Definite and specific predictions were evidently not of very great value in the minds of the greater prophets. The fact is that we could find much more of this sort of thing in the utterances of non-Hebraic seers and of the Hebrew prophets of a lesser order than we meet in the oracles of the great creative prophets of Israel. These exalted souls were not content to be mere diviners striving to wrest the secrets of the unknown from the clutches of the gods. They were enlisted for a task even more difficult than that of piloting the footsteps of the nation by the aid of advance information regarding the programme of Yahweh. Their preaching was of the sort to stimulate and challenge faith rather than to stifle it by removing all necessity for its exercise because of the substitution of knowledge for faith.

While there is but little prediction of a specific and concrete sort in the Old

Testament, there is quite a good deal of another kind. The prophets frequently present warnings or promises relating to the future. These are, for the most part, general in scope and more or less hazy and indefinite as to details. Amos, for example, at first threatens Israel and the surrounding peoples with a certain fearful, fiery form of destruction, of which nothing definite is said except that it is punishment inflicted by Yahweh for sin. Later on he seems to have decided upon some invading army as Yahweh's agent of destruction. Apparently, he expected the blow to fall almost immediately, but Samaria stood about forty years longer. Hosea reiterated the same message of destruction, seeming to vacillate between Assyria and Egypt as the executors of Yahweh's wrath. Zephaniah looked for a world-devastating cataclysm, with the Scythian invasion as a forerunner. Jeremiah probably shared the same view in his early ministry; but



later came to see that the Babylonian was the chosen instrument in Yahweh's hands. The author of Isaiah 40-55 promised his people deliverance from exile at the hands of Cyrus and expected that deliverance to be the dawn of the Messianic age of glory. Haggai and Zechariah, a generation later, were still hoping for the Messiah's appearance and told Judah that the rebuilding of the temple was all that was needed to make certain the crowning of Zerubbabel as Messianic King, and the realisation of all their hopes of Messianic blessedness. Such threats of punishment on the one hand and predictions of blessing on the other were, as a rule, of the most general character. They were, indeed, largely without form and void. The fact of the coming of punishment or of blessing was almost the only definite thing about them. The form of the punishment or the content of the blessing was usually left undefined, being



described only in the most general and elusive terms. The time for its realisation was usually represented as lying in the immediate future, but of the day and hour no word was given.

For a right understanding of such prophetic utterances it is important to remember that prediction was not, for the prophets, an end in itself. They had no desire to be known as infallible prognosticators. Prediction was not to them of primary importance; it was but a means for the attainment of a greater end. They were interested in the future, to be sure. Indeed, in a sense, all their work looked toward the future. Yet they were well aware that that future was dependent upon the present and that the latter, therefore, could not be ignored, but was of prime significance. So, in a sense, also, their first interest was in the present. They sought in every possible way to bring their people to make that present what it ought to

be.<sup>1</sup> They brought to bear upon the children of the present all their hopes and fears as to the future. They insisted constantly that the present was the future in the making and that there could not possibly be any divorce between the two. They appealed to their people's patriotism in the hope of securing a response in repentance and reform that would make a glorious future possible. They appealed to their sense of justice that they might forsake oppression for the same reason. They threatened them with impending disaster that they might terrify them into goodness and thus guarantee a splendid future for Israel. They promised them wonderful manifestations of Yahweh's power and love that they might lift them out of despair and spur them for-

<sup>1</sup> Moses Bottenwieser (*The Prophets of Israel* [1914], pp. 178, 297) repeats the mistaken view that the prophets had little expectation of effecting any change in the lives of their contemporaries. This seems psychologically impossible and in conflict with the whole spirit and aim of prophecy.

ward to fresh endeavour for the sake of the future. Prediction, then, was to some extent a homiletical method for achieving moral and spiritual results for the present.

It will at once appear, then, that there was a large element of the conditional in prediction. In proportion as a prophet was successful in his main endeavour, many of his predictions would fail to be realised. If a prophet threatened punishment from Yahweh for sin, in the hope of bringing Israel to repentance, his success as a prophet required that his prediction should induce the repentance which would obviate the necessity for that punishment. This point of view is clearly stated in Jer. 18 : 1-10, the closing portion of which reads:

At the moment I speak concerning a nation, and  
concerning a kingdom,  
To pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it;  
If that nation turn from its wickedness concern-  
ing which I spoke,

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I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to it.  
And at the moment I speak concerning a nation,  
and concerning a kingdom, to build and to  
plant it;

If it do evil in my sight in not obeying my voice,  
Then will I repent of the good, wherewith I said  
I would benefit them.

Such a platform as this could be used by a disingenuous prophet to vindicate himself no matter how events came about. Indeed, in all good faith, a man like Jeremiah would find no difficulty in explaining the course of events upon this basis. If disaster came notwithstanding repentance, the penitence was not genuine or was too facile. If prosperity came notwithstanding persistence in evil, then the prosperity was only transitory and the punishment would be all the more terrible when it did come.

In fact, not infrequently we must freely recognise that the specific elements in the predictions of the prophets failed of fulfilment. History is the authoritative and final judge in this matter. Amos

apparently looked for the fall of Samaria within a few years at the most (Amos 7 : 17); but that event did not arrive till 722 B. C., about forty years after the time of his oracle. Micah expected Sennacherib to lay Jerusalem in ruins (3 : 12), but Sennacherib left her unscathed to stand for more than a hundred years. Zephaniah and Jeremiah seem to have been called forth by the Scythian invasion, from which they anticipated dire calamity to Judah; but the Scythians passed by leaving Judah practically untouched. The author of Isaiah 40-55 predicted the dawn of the Messianic age upon the release of Judah from captivity. Haggai and Zechariah saw in Zerubbabel the Messiah himself and urged Judah to remove the obstacles in the way of the immediate manifestation of Messianic glory; the same hopes possessed Malachi and other postexilic prophets; but the Messianic age is yet to dawn. The prophets were not gifted

in the art of reading the details of the future to any greater extent than experts along these lines elsewhere in the world. In so far as they did indicate the general direction of human progress, it was due to the fact that they were better qualified students of the present than others. They were in profounder sympathy with the eternal purpose, and by keen discernment of its workings in the past and present were able to forecast the main lines of operation in the immediate future.

The Hebrew predictions of a calamity upon the heathen and blessing upon Israel are partly the expression of a profound conviction of the moral justice of God. The history of Israel, especially during the later centuries, was a history of disaster and woe. This was, for the most part, inflicted by nations of far inferior ethical and spiritual ideals. The natural longings of the Hebrew soul find expression in these hopes for the future

and their passion for righteousness reinforces their hopes. From this point of view these predictions are the expression of the very soul of Israel. The certainty that glorifies them is of the heart and not the head. This side of the prophet's predictions may be illustrated by a modern parallel. An Armenian student in my classes,<sup>1</sup> during the period of the recent Balkan revolt against Turkey, thus wrote upon this question:

Two millions of suffering Armenians have been predicting the downfall of the Turk with just as much of a firm assurance and certainty as the old Hebrew prophets did the downfall of the Assyrian or the Babylonian. Disinterested people, outsiders, might have predicted the same end on the basis of certain facts observed in the situation which they believed would logically work out the decline and fall of Turkey. The basis of prediction for the Armenians was not what they could see and understand (though they were not lacking in intelligence), but what they felt in their hearts. They hate the Turk so bitterly—they so much long to see his end come

<sup>1</sup> Viz.: Mr. A. A. Bedikian, professor in Robert College, Constantinople.

—that they simply believe for a fact that it will come without fail. Strong feelings create a vision of a future certainty. It may seem an empty dream for another, but for the sufferer it has the sustaining power of a hopeful fact.

In view of the nature and function of prediction as thus far seen, it is clear that those who look to the prophetic writings for a key to the meaning of modern movements are demanding of the prophets what they never attempted to give. To read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah as a literal prediction of the career of Jesus of Nazareth is grossly to misunderstand the prophet who penned that noble ideal. To find in the book of Daniel descriptions of the course and fate of the Roman Catholic Church, or data for determining the chronology of the last age and the coming of the Day of Judgment, is to fail to appreciate the purpose of that book and the limitations of its author. The predictions of the prophets are rather their highest ideals



carried over into the region of the future and visualised. They are describing the world for us as they would like it to be and as they believed in God's good time it would be. In such utterances they are giving us dreams—not time-tables, pictures—not reality.

The day for the "fulfilment" of their visions has long since passed away. We are living in a new world, which is not the world of their dreams. Imperfect as our world is, we would not exchange it for the world they longed for if we could. We could not live content in their unreal world; we have outgrown its proportions in every direction. Their hopes, lofty as they were, cannot be our hopes. We must develop our own ideals and follow them toward the perfection that beckons afar. We shall be honouring the prophets not by a mere parrot-like repetition of their words and thoughts, but by a genuine sympathy with their spirit. The same divine discontent with

this world of the present and the same sort of hunger for "a world in which dwelleth righteousness" will stimulate us to the same sort of ceaseless effort for the improvement of the present that the coming of that better age be not too long delayed. We honour most the prophets of the past by giving diligent heed to the prophets of our own day as they warn us of our perils and point out for us the way of social betterment, clear-eyed justice and world-wide brotherhood.

## V

### A PROPHET'S MARRIAGE <sup>1</sup>

No portion of a prophet's life was exempt from service in behalf of the prophet's purpose. He denied himself the privileges and joys of other men if thereby he could the more effectively achieve his aim. He laid bare the secrets of his own heart and the tragedies of his own experience when by so doing he thought it possible to make a profound impression in favour of true religion. Jeremiah and Ezekiel furnish proof of this; but Hosea, in the story of his marriage, gives us the best illustration of a prophet's absolute self-abnegation.

The prevailing interpretation of Hosea's marriage is to the effect that Hosea,

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with slight revision from *The Biblical World*, vol. XLII, August, 1913.

as a young man, fell in love with Gomer and married her, supposing her to be all that his youthful imagination fancied her to be. To this union were born three children. But meantime Gomer had developed latent tendencies to sensuality and had played Hosea false. At last she left his home to live with another man. The love of Hosea, however, made it impossible for him to leave her to her fate, and, going after her, he purchased her from her paramour and placed her under restraint, preparatory to her full restoration to her position as his wife. Long brooding over this tragic experience produced in him the conviction that it all had been ordained of Yahweh to the end that Hosea might thereby be aroused to the true significance of Israel's attitude toward Yahweh and be inspired to preach to Israel regarding her sin. The whole experience was Yahweh's way of calling Hosea to be a prophet.

The attractiveness of this interpretation lies in the essentially human and natural character of the experience thus portrayed. It presents no psychological difficulties to the modern mind. Hosea becomes a man like ourselves, moved by similar passions and learning the will of God precisely as we do—by experience. Many of the leaders of modern scholarship have enthusiastically indorsed this view and furthered it by both learning and eloquence. Among others may be mentioned Cheyne, Wellhausen, W. Robertson Smith, Kuenen, George Adam Smith, A. B. Davidson, Nowack, Marti, and W. R. Harper. Yet I venture to think that the truth lies on the side of older generations of scholars, whose exegetical sense forbade them taking the language of Hosea as meaning other than what, on the face of it, it seems to say. Modern representatives of this view, which looks upon Gomer as having been a public prostitute when Hosea married

her, have not been lacking. The most forceful presentation of this interpretation in recent years is that of Professor Paul Volz, in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, XLIV (1898), 321-335. The present chapter proposes once more to array the evidence for a literal interpretation of the language of Hosea and to reconstruct this section of the biography of the prophet.<sup>1</sup>

The language of the narrative leaves no room for the view that Gomer was a woman with a tendency toward harlotry, rather than an out-and-out harlot. In support of the "tendency" view much has been made of the fact that in 1 : 2 Hosea is told to take "a wife of harlotries" (אִשֶּׁת זְנוּנִים), not "a harlotrous wife." But there is no chance for the idea "a wife with tendencies toward

<sup>1</sup> After this chapter in its original form was put in type, but before its publication, Professor C. H. Toy, of Harvard University, published an article, "Note on Hosea 1-3," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XXXII (June, 1913), pp. 75-79, in which he also declared for a literal interpretation of the language descriptive of Gomer.

harlotry" in the former phrase. Exactly the same idiom is employed in Prov. 12 : 4; 31 : 10 and Ruth 3 : 11, where "a woman (or wife) of virtue" certainly does not and cannot mean "a woman with tendencies toward virtue," but simply "a virtuous woman." The same thing is true of similar phrases in Prov. 6 : 24; 9 : 13; 11 : 16; 21 : 9; 25 : 24; and 27 : 15. Hosea himself uses the same idiom again in 4 : 12 and 5 : 4, where "a spirit of harlotries" is clearly something more than "a spirit with tendencies toward harlotry." The idiom is simply one of the regular ways of predicating a characteristic of a person and cannot legitimately be made to carry such a load as the "tendency" view places upon it. Gomer, the "wife of harlotries," was nothing more nor less than a "wife who plays the harlot."

Nor is it true that Hosea was made a prophet by his marriage. According to the literal sense of the narrative, the

marriage itself was imposed upon him by the word of Yahweh; *i. e.*, he was already a prophet before marriage. Even if this plain statement might be legitimately set aside on the ground that it is the product of Hosea's later reflection upon the cause and significance of his marriage, it yet remains true that Hosea was a prophet at the time of the birth of the first child, for he bestowed upon him a name having prophetic significance. Yet it is quite generally held by exponents of the "tendency" view that at this time Hosea knew nothing of his wife's unfaithfulness, which is supposed to have kindled in him the prophetic fire. Furthermore, it is not at all necessary to posit a tragic marital experience in explanation of the origin of Hosea's characteristic conception of the relation between Yahweh and Israel as one in which the ruling principle should be a mutual love, like that which should obtain between husband and wife.



The representation of a god as the husband of his land was close at hand in the Baalism of the day, in which this was the basic thought. The thought of Yahweh's love for his people, even though they were sinful, was by no means new; it is implied in Amos 2 : 9-11 and 3 : 2 and finds clear expression in the stories of J and E incorporated in the Hexateuch; *e. g.*, Ex. 15 : 13; Joshua 23 : 4-11; Deut. 33 : 12. It would have been wholly cruel to require Hosea to arrive at the idea of Yahweh's love for Israel through such a heart-breaking experience as the "tendency" view presupposes, when that idea lay ready to hand, having been worked out in the experience of preceding generations.

The "tendency" view also implies that Hosea first of all received a revelation from Yahweh through the marriage experience, which he was to pass on to the people of Israel. But there is not a word said in the narrative about this

mediating function of Hosea. Judging from analogous records, in which the rôle of mediator is always explicitly enjoined upon the prophet, it is not likely that this mediating task was to be taken for granted by Hosea. The brevity of the record is a most serious obstacle in the path of the "tendency" interpretation, for that view implies so much that is not mentioned in the narrative. So vital an element in the experience as Hosea's failure to discover Gomer's true character before he married her and the consequent paralysing revelation of it afterward could hardly have been passed over in utter silence.<sup>1</sup> Nor would there have been left unexplained such an extraordinary fact as Hosea's continuing his marital relations with a wife after

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the statement of Professor Toy in the article previously mentioned: "The romantic history of a man wounded in his deepest feelings through an ill-fated marriage that saddened his life and coloured his thought seems to me to have no foundation in the text. If there had been passionate devotion and sorrow there would doubtless have been some mention of it, but there is none; the narrative is a quiet statement of facts."

the birth of two children, one of whom at least was known to be a child of shame, if Gomer's true nature had been unknown to him before his marriage. Furthermore, such a case of adultery as is presupposed by this view was punishable by death; *cf.* Deut. 22 : 22 *f.*; Ezek. 16 : 40. Hosea could hardly have passed over in silence his reason for not having the law enforced.

Hosea was not led blindfolded by Yahweh into a marriage that was to break his heart and wreck his life. On the contrary, he married a woman of evil reputation with his eyes wide open. If this seem to us a psychological impossibility, we need only recall other cases in which prophets did extraordinary things. The psychology of a prophet was not subject to the laws controlling the mental operations of ordinary men. The belief that Yahweh willed the performance of any act was enough to lead him to undertake the most unusual, yea,

repugnant programme. Illustrations of this absolute surrender to the will of Yahweh are furnished in Isaiah 20 : 2 *f.* and Ezek. 4 : 4 *ff.*, 12 *ff.*; 12 : 3 *ff.*; 24 : 16 *ff.* Nor are instances of similar character wanting in more recent times. Simeon Stylites spending almost half a century continuously upon the top of a column, thinking that thereby he was pleasing God, is a case in point. An act looked upon as God-ordained and recognised as such from the start is thereby lifted above all ordinary rules of procedure. The will of God transcends all other laws.

The moral problem raised by such a command from Yahweh for the modern mind would not present itself to the men of the eighth century B. C. The moral difficulty is essentially the same on either hypothesis. For Yahweh to order a prophet to marry a woman who, as Yahweh knows, will turn out a harlot is every whit as bad as for him to

bid the prophet marry one who is already a harlot. But this aspect of the question would present no serious difficulty to men who were able to think of Yahweh as hardening Pharaoh's heart to the end that he might destroy him, or as stirring up David to number Israel only to punish him for so doing, or as inspiring a body of prophets to tell Ahab a lie in order that Ahab might go to his death.

The marriage to Gomer presented itself to Hosea as required of him by Yahweh, precisely because it was an extraordinary and sensational act. It was calculated to attract wide-spread attention. It and the succeeding births were vivid object-lessons for the whole nation. Such a marriage inevitably would provoke questions and give Hosea an eager audience for his answers. These show that he intended that his family life should be regarded as a concrete illustration of the nature of the relation-

ship between Yahweh and Israel. Just at this point we need to guard against misinterpretation of the marriage. Its purpose was to present the existing situation in Israel from the point of view of Yahweh. It is reading into the narrative what is not there to insist that it shall represent the whole history of Israel's relation to Yahweh, and that Gomer, therefore, must have been a pure young maiden at the time of her marriage, even as Israel is represented elsewhere (*cf.* Hosea 11 : 1; Ezek. 16) to have been at the time when Yahweh chose her as his people. But the demands of the narrative and of the experience itself are satisfied if the marriage be looked upon as a striking portrayal of the utter lack of inner sympathy between Yahweh and Israel in Hosea's own day, and especially of the base disloyalty and ingratitude of Israel in not giving her full and undivided allegiance to Yahweh, her rightful Lord (*cf.* Hosea 2 : 5 *ff.*).

The name Gomer bath disclaim itself may furnish evidence of the true character of its owner before her marriage. The meaning of the name is, perhaps, "Gomer, daughter of fig-cakes." The real significance of the name is, on this basis, "Gomer whose person is held at a low value." The point of view is furnished by a statement from an Arabic writer, viz.: "We used to conclude *mota*-marriages for a handful of dates and meal in the time of the prophet and Abu-bekr, until Omar forbade us such."<sup>1</sup> The *mota*-marriage was a temporary union between a man and woman and altogether unworthy of the name of marriage. The same phraseological usage appears in the common English idiom, found also in Latin, "not worth a fig." If this be the meaning of the name, Gomer is thereby branded as a woman who could be obtained for very

<sup>1</sup> See Eb. Nestle, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXIII, 346, and XXIX 234; cf. W. Baumgarten, *ibid.*, XXXIII, 78.



low hire, not more than a couple of handfuls of figs. The phrase "lovers of raisin cakes" in Hosea 3 : 1 belongs in the same general circle of ideas; for there the "other gods" are thought of as hiring the service of Israel with gifts of raisin cakes. It is true that the word "daughter" does not occur elsewhere as indicative of price or value. But the terms "son" and "daughter" do have a much wider range of meaning in Hebrew than in English. They are used, for example, to express a person's age, viz., "Noah was a son of five hundred years," etc., *i. e.*, Noah was five hundred years old (Gen. 5 : 32; 7 : 6, etc.); or to denote a characteristic, as "Joseph is a son of a fruitful one," *i. e.*, Joseph is a fruitful bough (Gen. 49 : 22), and "a son of perverse rebelliousness" (I Sam. 20 : 30), and "a vineyard on a hill a son of oil," *i. e.*, a vineyard on a very fertile hill (Isaiah 5 : 1), and "daughter of troops," *i. e.*, warlike one (Micah 5 : 1).



This usage comes at times very close to the idea of price or value, as, *e. g.*, in "a son of death," *i. e.*, one deserving death (I Sam. 20 : 31), and "a son of smiting," *i. e.*, one deserving a beating (Deut. 25 : 2). Yet, lacking any exact parallel, we cannot dogmatically assert that this must be the true interpretation of Gomer's name; it remains only an attractive possibility.

It remains to consider the light shed upon the story of chapter 1 by the narrative of chapter 3. This has usually been taken as a record of Hosea's love for his wife which led him to go after her when she had deserted his bed and board and to purchase her back from her paramour. But this interpretation encounters serious difficulties. Why should the dissolute Gomer, whom Hosea by this time, according to hypothesis, knows only too well, be spoken of to him not as "thy wife" but as "a woman"? If his runaway wife were here meant we

should certainly expect a much more definite and specific description of her to her deserted husband than "a woman."

Again, why should Hosea have purchased his own wife from her paramour? Was she not already his morally and legally? Or was Hosea a weakling who dared not insist upon his rights and was willing to purchase peace at any price, even that of his own dishonour? If Hosea took back his wife, who had forsaken him for another man, would not his act have been looked upon as at least as scandalous as that postulated in Jer. 3 : 1? The silence of the narrative regarding the desertion of Hosea by his wife is surprising. It is not mentioned at all but taken for granted. Yet such a step on Gomer's part would have been too vital an element in the situation to be ignored. It would have been precisely the sort of thing of which Hosea would have made splendid use in setting forth the significance of his marriage for Israel.

These difficulties with the current interpretation have been so keenly felt that some scholars have sought to avoid them all by making the woman of chapter 3 to be another than Gomer. But this device has not met with any general approval, and rightly so; for the experience that was pedagogically of value upon its first occurrence would have lost all novelty and value if repeated. Instead of wondering and questioning, Hosea's contemporaries would have been satisfied to set him down as a stark fool and would have gone about their own affairs and left him to his fate.

A suggestion recently made<sup>1</sup> seems to relieve the difficulty here. Chapter 3 is not the record of a later stage than chapter 1 in the marital experience of Hosea but is rather a parallel narrative recording the initiation of the original marriage with Gomer. The record of

<sup>1</sup> By C. Steuernagel, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1912), p. 605.

chapter 3 is the story as told by Hosea himself in the first person; that of chapter 1 is the story as told by another. This accounts for the more specific and concrete detail of chapter 3. This calls for a new translation of 3 : 1, to be sure, but it is a translation that finds its justification in the usage of numerous other passages. Instead of "And Yahweh said to me, Again go, love," etc., we must render: "And Yahweh said to me again, Go, love," etc. For illustration of this position of the word "again," see Hosea 2 : 16, "Thou wilt not call me again"; Isaiah 8 : 5, "And Yahweh added to speak to me again"; Isaiah 62 : 4, "It shall not be said to thee again." This "again" may imply that Yahweh had previously urged this step upon Hosea without effect, as in the case of Jonah. Or it may merely mean that the command to marry a prostitute was not the first communication between Yahweh and Hosea. In any case, this transla-

tion delivers us from the hypothesis of a second marriage and from the difficulty of finding an explanation for Hosea's purchase of his renegade wife.<sup>1</sup> On the understanding that this is Hosea's own story of the first and only marriage with Gomer, the purchase becomes at once natural. Marriage regularly involved the payment of a dowry to the bride's guardians; *cf.* the story of Jacob's marriages (Gen. 29 : 15 *ff.*). The low price paid for the bride, according to Hosea 3 : 1, accords well with the interpretation of "Gomer bath diblaim" (1 : 3) as "Gomer, daughter of figs," which is suggested above.

On the basis of these two records of the marriage we may, perhaps, reconstruct the story of Hosea's experience as follows: Hosea, a prophet already burdened with the sense of his people's sin, felt himself called upon by Yahweh to marry

<sup>1</sup> Steuernagel and Toy account for "again" as an editorial gloss made to join the two narratives chronologically.

a lewd woman, to the end that through such a marriage he might open the eyes of Israel to the enormity of its offence in being disloyal to Yahweh, its rightful lord. In pursuance of this conviction, Hosea bought Gomer, a woman living in public shame with her paramour. But he at once placed her under restraint, denying her association with himself as well as with others, and seeking by such discipline to fit her for her position as his wife. This phase of the experience was interpreted for Israel as meaning that she as Yahweh's bride must be disciplined by exile before she could expect to enjoy any further favour from Yahweh. After this period of restraint for Gomer she was taken by Hosea into his home and became the mother of three children. Each of these in succession was given a prophetic name and, like Isaiah's children, became a walking sermon to Israel just as the institution of the marriage itself had been.

In this connection it must be remembered that the names given to the children need cast no slur upon the birth of the children nor upon their character. The names carried by Isaiah's children certainly were not meant to bear any relation whatsoever to the children themselves. Hence, the names are not necessarily proof that the children of Hosea were not his own.

If, however, the names of the children and the fact that in Hosea 1 : 2 they are called "children of whoredom," *i. e.*, children of harlotrous parentage, should seem to some to imply that Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea after her marriage, it is equally possible to suppose that Hosea took Gomer into the full rights of wifehood immediately upon marrying her. In that case, the birth of the children, who were of doubtful parentage, and the names bestowed upon them did but impress upon the public mind more deeply the lesson of

the marriage itself. Then after exhausting every means, supposably, to keep Gomer in the path of virtue, Hosea put her in isolation; and there the story leaves her, to preach her silent sermon.

If it be objected to this interpretation that Hosea could not have loved a woman of such a type, it is sufficient to say that he is not anywhere said to have loved her. The nearest approach to such a statement is 3 : 1, where Yahweh bids him "go, love a woman," etc. But it is worthy of note that in the very same sentence the same word "love" (אהב) is used to characterise the relationship between the woman in question and her paramour. The word frequently is used to denote mere carnal passion (*e. g.*, II Sam. 13 : 1, 4, 15; I Kings 11 : 1, 2), having no suggestion of genuine spiritual love. The fact is that early Hebrew had no word strictly corresponding to "marry," and in issuing a command to marry it was necessary to use some



descriptive phrase, such as "take a woman" (Hosea 1 : 2), or "become a daughter's husband" (Deut. 7 : 3), or "love a woman." Love is not subject to orders, and even a prophet could not command his feelings to the extent of loving in the true sense whenever and wherever Yahweh told him to love. Yahweh's command was really nothing more than "Go, marry a woman." Nor was it necessary that true love on Hosea's part should enter into the marriage at all. The lesson of the marriage for Israel was not dependent upon any deep feeling toward Gomer on Hosea's side. The essential thing was that Hosea had taken Gomer under his roof and had thereby become responsible for her support and likewise entitled to her undivided loyalty. Lacking this on her part, the marriage must be suspended, or broken off, until such time as she is found to be worthy of restoration. In like manner Yahweh had taken Israel

from among the nations to be his own people. He had showered prosperity upon her and given her every reason to remain true and faithful to him. She, however, had taken up the worship of other gods and was thus, at least, sharing her devotion between Yahweh and them. This state of affairs could not continue indefinitely; Yahweh would not endure it. Its only possible outcome was exile and captivity.

No serious difficulty lies in the fact that such a marriage was in the highest degree sensational in character. This very fact made it of the greater value in Hosea's eyes. The prophets were never deterred from any course by the fear of its being considered startling. The standards of taste of that day were not identical with ours; but the prophets were not afraid to violate such standards as there were. Isaiah walked the streets of Jerusalem in stark nakedness; Ezekiel broke through the wall of his

own house and moved out his goods under cover of the dark; Jeremiah dragged his dirty linen before the public eye. Hosea is moving along the same lines when he marries a harlot and declares it to be in obedience to Yahweh's behest.

To take this view of Hosea's marriage is not to make Hosea less of a prophet but more. He is seen to be a man whose whole life, even in its most intimate relationships, was held subject to the control of Yahweh. He seeks every possible way to impress the message of Yahweh upon Israel and does not hesitate to forego the possibility of a happy home life—yea, even to doom himself to a miserable existence—if thereby he can the more effectively deliver his message. In this respect he recalls the experience of Jeremiah who deliberately denied himself the joys of home life for a similar reason, and that of Ezekiel, who forbade himself the natural expression of his grief when his heart was bro-

ken by the death of his wife. Hosea thus becomes one more illustration of the strength of the passion of self-sacrifice exercised in behalf of patriotism and religion.

The record of such an experience as this marriage warns us not to make the mistake of classifying the prophets as men of ordinary and especially of modern minds. The possibilities of prophetic action may not be restricted to those things which a modern man would naturally do or say. The consciousness that they were merely instruments in the hands of Yahweh put the prophets into a class by themselves. This fixed idea lay behind all their thought and action. They did not hold themselves responsible for their words and deeds; it was Yahweh's hand that pointed out to them their duty. "Their's not to reason why; their's but to do and die." Men who have thus surrendered their minds and wills, or have thus seated their minds

upon the throne of God, identifying their own mental operations with the movements of the divine thought, are in great danger. Genius is said to lie next door to madness; prophecy certainly was very near the border line. It is not surprising that the two spheres of insanity and prophecy were so closely associated in early Israelitish thought (see page 45). The actions of Isaiah (20 : 2 f.) and Ezekiel would certainly at the present day be taken as indicative of insanity, and they were evidently only slightly less startling in that day than they would be now. Our insane asylums contain many men and women who look upon themselves as the spokesmen or agents of God. The prophets were saved from the danger of becoming madmen by the fact that they kept so closely in touch with life in all its phases. They never ceased to be practical men. Consequently they developed a breadth of vision that kept them from becoming

absurd or impossible. Their sanity was of the largest order and enabled them to stand the strain that would have torn smaller minds from their moorings. But in attempting to understand their motives and their policies we must never lose sight of their absolute resignation of the right to call their souls their own.

## VI

### THE PROPHET AND THE STATE

THE prophet's objective was the welfare of the state. Not until the days of Ezekiel was serious attention given to the "cure of souls" (see following chapter). The prophet did not wholly ignore the individual, to be sure; but his interest in him was determined by his value and significance for the community as a whole. In so far as individuals affected the life of the nation, the prophet was concerned with them, but not with individuals for their own sake.

The prophet's consuming desire was the consummation of the glory of the kingdom of Yahweh. This kingdom of Yahweh was for the prophet no esoteric society but the actually existing king-

dom of Israel. This was the object of his affections and the centre of all his hopes. Not until the futility of expecting any great political glory for Israel was fully apparent did the prophets abandon the hope of the kingdom as a whole and turn their faces toward an Israel within Israel.

The religious life of both the prophet and his audience found expression in a state church. The interests of church and state were inextricably mixed. What concerned the one was of vital interest to the other. Samuel apparently not only anointed but had much to do with the selection of Saul, the first King. Solomon appointed Zadok chief priest in Jerusalem (I Kings 2 : 35). Jehoiada the priest organised the conspiracy that resulted in the slaughter of Athaliah and crowned Jehoash King in her place (II Kings 11 : 4-20). The Deuteronomic reform was carried through under the auspices of King Josiah. These and other



such facts show the close relationship of sceptre and mitre. All the citizens of the state were at the same time members of the church. While there might be opposing political parties on any given issue, all parties alike swore allegiance to Yahweh as the national God. From the founding of the monarchy on down there were never any serious contenders with Yahweh for the position as head of the state religion. Nor was there ever any movement looking to the abolition of a state religion as such. The place of Yahwism in Israel was assured. The prophet consequently was not so much struggling for the preservation of the existence of Yahwism as he was insisting upon his people and government giving full and free course to Yahweh's will as he revealed it unto them. This brought the prophet into close touch with practically every phase of the social and political life of Israel and made the range of his interests and activities as wide as those

of the nation. Inevitably, therefore, the prophet who adequately discharged his mission was called upon to be a statesman. He was Yahweh's ambassador to Israel. The aim of this chapter is to indicate by some examples the ways in which and the degree to which the prophet met this demand to furnish guidance in the political turmoil and confusion of the times.

In the latter part of the eleventh century B. C., a struggle for the supremacy in Canaan set in between the Philistines and the Hebrews. In its earlier stages Israel was unable to hold its own. The Philistines were victors on the battlefield (I Sam. 4); they captured the ark of Yahweh itself (4 : 11); and they reduced Israel to humiliating bondage (I Sam. 13 : 19-23). An occasional victory, however, served to buoy up the spirits of the Hebrews (I Sam. 7 : 9 ff.). Israel's weakness and disgrace lay heavily upon the minds of the prophets.

Bands of prophetic patriots roamed up and down the land seeking to arouse enthusiasm and courage in Israel for a supreme effort toward the attainment of liberty for the nation and glory for Yahweh. One prophet of commanding personality recognised that the need of the day was unification and efficient leadership. He not only saw that need but found the man to meet it. Hence, when the young Saul came to Samuel looking for his lost asses, he found far more than he had anticipated. Samuel inspired him with a vision of his people's needs and of his own opportunity and sent him on his way thinking of greater things than straying donkeys. Thus, when the critical moment came Saul was ready to take advantage of it (I Sam. 11 : 1-11) and to strike an effective blow for freedom. A careful comparison of the conflicting records of the establishment of the monarchy makes it clear that, far from opposing the step,

Samuel was the leader and guide in the whole movement. The representations to the contrary in I Samuel are quite generally recognised as reflecting the point of view of later times regarding the monarchy, when the freedom-loving Hebrews had come to feel keenly the heavy burden of taxation involved in the maintenance of an established government and a standing army. But Samuel saw that the maintenance of Israel's independent sovereignty among the nations was possible only under the leadership of a competent king, strong enough to bind the loosely allied clans together in a firm allegiance and courageous enough to lead them forth under Yahweh's banner to victory over Philistia. The interests of the state and those of religion were here one and the same. For should Israel completely have lost its political liberty at this early day the religion of Yahweh would have disappeared from the face of the earth. A god who could

not have conquered his people's foes could never have won his people's hearts or retained their fealty.

In connection with the death of David intrigues developed in the court and the royal family, and rival claimants for the succession appeared. Adonijah, an older son, seemed to be sweeping everything before him. But Nathan the prophet started a movement in favour of Solomon, and with the aid of Bathsheba, his mother, secured David's indorsement of Solomon's coronation. This political activity of Nathan the prophet in support of Solomon brings to mind the indorsement by Ahijah the Shilonite of the revolt of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, from Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The motives which led Nathan to support Solomon's claim for the throne are not apparent to us. But the reasons for Ahijah's desertion of Solomon and Rehoboam are manifest. Rehoboam's autocratic programme, his utter disregard of

the protests of his oppressed subjects against the continuance of the heavy burdens of taxation and forced labour imposed by Solomon, and the tolerance of non-Hebraic religions and customs by both Solomon and Rehoboam (who was himself the son of an Ammonitess) are clear occasions of offence to Ahijah. Yahweh was the defender of the oppressed and entitled to the exclusive devotion of his nation in the thought of all the prophets. Ahijah may also have been influenced by other considerations. As an inhabitant of Shiloh, the seat of an ancient sanctuary, he may have resented the prestige acquired by the new temple at Jerusalem. As a northerner, he may have objected to the prominence given to Judah by the Davidic dynasty. As a prophet whose predecessors had made and unmade kings he may have feared the loss of prophetic influence over a king who owed his elevation to the throne in no way to the prophets. Whatever the

dominating motives may have been, Ahijah and his colleagues did not hesitate to throw the whole weight of the prophetic influence on the side of revolt and disruption.

The same policy of opposition and conspiracy against the reigning house was pursued by Elijah and Elisha. According to I Kings 19 : 16 and II Kings 9 : 1 ff., both Elijah and Elisha sought the overthrow of Ahab's house, which was consummated by Jehu. The underlying causes for this breach between the prophet and the King were in essence the same as in the case of the disruption. Ahab and his Queen showed too much favour to the Baal of Tyre to please the jealous representative of Yahweh. That Ahab in no sense proposed to forsake or repudiate Yahweh is quite clear. He named his children in honour of Yahweh, viz.: Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joram, all compounds including the divine name Yah. When needing an oracle regard-

ing the outcome of the attack upon Ramoth-Gilead, Ahab was able to summon four hundred prophets of Yahweh to his aid. Nor was the danger of the triumph of Baalism so imminent as the records of Elijah's campaign against it would lead us to think. For when Jehu sent out word to gather all the worshippers of Baal to a great festival in honour of Baal the whole company was not so large but that it could be accommodated within the precincts of a single shrine (II Kings 10 : 18-28). But Elijah resented any recognition by the government of any other god than Yahweh; hence he condemned Ahab and denounced him. The episode of Naboth's vineyard represents the other element of Ahab's policy which was obnoxious to the prophets. It was part and parcel of the same autocratic spirit and method to which the yeomen of Israel had objected in the time of Solomon and Rehoboam. It was in direct



conflict with the freedom-loving democracy of the north, which ever became restless under the heavy hand of despotism. Thus Elijah utilised both religious and social forces for the accomplishment of his purpose against Ahab.

Ahab, on the other hand, was the strongest King who had thus far occupied the throne of the northern kingdom. He had come to the kingdom at a time when strength and strategy were called for by the situation developing in western Asia. Ahab saw that he was involved in a great struggle and strained every nerve to bring victory to his side. Assyria was pushing westward and on toward Egypt. The little states of Syria dropped their petty wars with one another and combined their resources to repel the invader. Ahab co-operated in this movement. He maintained an alliance with Tyre, having married its King's daughter; he made alliance with Judah, and, dropping the bitter hostili-

ties with Damascus, he entered upon alliance there, too. Thus at peace on every side, he joined in the common effort to beat back Assyria. In 854 B. C. battle was joined at Karkar between Shalmaneser of Assyria and twelve kings of the West-land, of whom Ahab was one; and his quota of troops was one of the largest among the allies. The struggle was indecisive and was renewed again in 850, 849, and 846 B. C. The only possible chance for success in this struggle for life on the part of the West-land lay in the whole-hearted support of all the governments endangered. Ahab, as a shrewd statesman, saw the danger and did his best to meet it. Elijah apparently saw and cared nothing in regard to the interests that Ahab held dear. He therefore pestered Ahab with constant preachments regarding exclusive loyalty to Yahweh and full recognition of the rights of Hebrew farmers. To Ahab, concerned with weighty matters of

state, these affairs that meant so much to Elijah must have seemed trifling, and it is no wonder that he broke out in anger against the prophet: "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" But, after all, Ahab was concerned with the things that are of but passing moment, while Elijah and his followers were devoted to the things that are of eternal significance. No matter how effectively Ahab and his allies might mass their resources, the final victory of Assyria was inevitable. The political independence of Israel could not be maintained. But the spiritual supremacy of Israel was not dependent upon political success. The prophet who wrought for the elevation of Israel's religious and ethical standards was giving himself to a work that had enduring foundations.

A century and more after Elijah's time we find Isaiah holding forth prophetic ideals in Judah. His lot was cast in troublous times. One critical situa-

tion succeeded another with but short intermission. There was need of wise guidance, courageous faith, and strong endurance. It was no easy task that confronted those who held the helm of state in Isaiah's day. The first crisis in his lifetime was the Syro-Ephraimite invasion of Judah in 735 B. C. The little states of western Asia were again conspiring together to rid themselves of the Assyrian peril. This time they had a powerful ally in the kingdom of Urartu, located around Lake Van in Armenia. Just when Tiglath-pileser IV was devastating Urartu, Syria and Ephraim, with Philistia, formed a coalition against him. Into this they sought to bring Judah. But Ahaz was either neutral or else pro-Assyrian in his policy. Consequently the allies set upon him intending to force his kingdom into compliance with their plans. When Pekah and Rezin invaded Judah terror fell upon the populace. In the expressive words of Isaiah 7 : 2: "His

heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind."

At this juncture Ahaz and his court saw no alternative but to appeal to Assyria for aid. This, of course, meant the acknowledgment of the suzerainty of Assyria by Judah in the payment of tribute and the like. But Isaiah was of a different mould and protested strongly, in the name of Yahweh, against any such confession of weakness, which was in the last analysis a confession of doubt in Yahweh's power and love. Could not and would not Yahweh save his own people, without the intervention of any foreign power or the invocation of any foreign gods? Indeed, would not Assyria herself, without solicitation, swoop down upon Syria and Ephraim, since they were engaged in movements directed against her? In any case, Isaiah denounces the policy of appeal to Nineveh and insists upon a contrary

policy of faith in Yahweh. "If you will not believe, surely you will not be established." He assures Ahaz that the invasion will come to naught and that the invaders will themselves be destroyed. This prediction Isaiah offers to confirm by the performance of a sign; and when Ahaz declines the opportunity to put him to the test, he voluntarily gives him the Immanuel sign. Whatever else this sign may or may not signify, it evidently was put forward as conclusive proof that the downfall of the enemy and the deliverance of Judah were near at hand. "For before the child (viz., Immanuel) shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken" (Isaiah 7 : 16).

Isaiah's protest was in vain. Ahaz refused to make the venture of faith. He preferred the safe course of submission and humiliation. "So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, King of

Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son; come up and save me out of the hand of the King of Syria, and out of the hand of the King of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and the gold that was found in the house of Yahweh and in the treasures of the King's house, and sent it for a present to the King of Assyria. And the King of Assyria hearkened unto him; and the King of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, and carried its people captive to Kir, and slew Rezin'' (II Kings 16 : 7 *f.*).

In 713-711 B. C. another attempt to repudiate Assyria was made by the western states. As we learn from Sargon's own records, the conspiring states were Egypt, Ashdod, Edom, Moab, and Judah. Isaiah's attitude on this occasion, as shown in Isaiah 20, was one of unalterable opposition to the whole movement. He saw no possibility of anything but defeat and failure. The hopes of the

conspirators were not without a certain measure of plausibility. A new and vigorous Ethiopian dynasty was now in control of Egypt. Was not Egypt a great power, a worthy rival of Assyria? With her aid, might not victory be won? The scene of the struggle was far removed from the Assyrian home base, thus constituting in itself a heavy handicap upon her efforts. Furthermore, Merodach-baladan, with the aid of the King of Elam, had wrested from Sargon the independence of Babylon and was a constant source of trouble to Assyria from 722 to 710 B. C. This loss of prestige and power to Assyria was, of course, known and rejoiced in throughout all the west. Another vigorous foe was active in the north, where Urartu had reasserted itself after its overthrow by Tiglath-pileser IV. It had incited other neighbouring peoples to revolt. Hence Sargon was kept busy with expeditions against Urartu and the north, which



followed one another in rapid succession, viz., in 719, 718, 716, 715, 714, 713, and 711 B. C. Thus, with Elam and Babylonia co-operating on the east and south, Urartu and its neighbours from Lake Urumia to the Mediterranean in revolt on the north, and the states of Syria-Palestine combining with Egypt and certain Arabian tribes on the west and south, it is not to be set down as political and military stupidity that the leaders of Judah believed it possible to obtain freedom from the galling yoke of Assyria. But Isaiah in most sensational and persistent manner urged upon his countrymen to refrain from entering into this movement. That his advice was disregarded we know only from the fact that Sargon lists Judah among his foes upon this occasion. What caused Isaiah to oppose this which was apparently so patriotic and so promising an undertaking we are not told. He may have been a keener student of the situation than the

partisans of the anti-Assyrian programme and have foreseen the certain failure of the enterprise because of his more accurate estimate of the strength of the opposing forces. Or he may have opposed the policy for purely religious reasons. Co-operation on the part of Yahweh's people with heathen peoples was an insult to Yahweh. Was he not able to obtain, unaided, whatever he wished his people to possess? To join hands with the worshippers of other gods was to show distrust of Yahweh's power and to recognise the claims of his rivals. In any case, the issue of events vindicated Isaiah's counsel.

Once again does Isaiah come to the fore in an effort to influence the counsels of state. In 705 B. C. the mighty Sargon died and Sennacherib, his son, succeeded him upon the throne. This change of rulers seemed to the liberty-loving vassals of Assyria to offer a good opportunity for another blow for free-

dom. The prime mover in this revolt seems to have been Merodach-baladan, who had been subdued and expelled from Babylon by Sargon in 710 B. C. In 705-704 he again seized the throne of Babylon and held it against Sennacherib for a period of from six to nine months. In connection with this attack upon Sennacherib he stirred up revolt also in Phœnicia, Philistia, Egypt, and Judah. Jerusalem became a maelstrom of plots and counterplots. Ambassadors came there from Merodach-baladan (Isaiah 39), from Philistia (Isaiah 14 : 28 ff.), and from Egypt (Isaiah 18). Upon all this glow of preparation and enthusiasm Isaiah threw cold water in the form of predictions of failure of the enterprise. He sought with all his might to induce Hezekiah and his advisers to remain loyal to Assyria. In 735 B. C. he had opposed Ahaz in his purpose to assume gratuitously the yoke of Assyria's suzerainty; but in 711 and in 701 alike his

advice was to abide faithfully by the obligations they had voluntarily assumed. He assured the government that to depend upon Egypt for aid was but to lean upon a broken reed; she had never kept her promises and was unable to do so now (Isaiah 30 : 5 *ff.*; 3 : 1-9). He counselled, as before, that Israel should trust in Yahweh, forsake sin, and refrain from political intrigue. His whole message might be summarised as "trust in Yahweh and do good and thou shalt inherit the land."

The currents running against Isaiah were too deep and strong. His objections were swept aside. Hezekiah and his court were carried blithely into the conflict. When the irrevocable step had been taken, Isaiah consistently continued to interpret the will of Yahweh as boding ill for Judah. Here belong such oracles as 1 : 2-17; 22 : 1-14; and 17 : 12-18 : 6. The Assyrian is the rod in Yahweh's hands wherewith he will smite

Israel for its sins. Nothing but disaster awaits Jerusalem.

And in that day did the Lord, Yahweh of hosts,  
call

To weeping and to mourning and to baldness  
and to the girding on of sackcloth.

But, lo, there was rejoicing and mirth,

Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,

Eating of flesh and drinking of wine;

“Eat and drink—for tomorrow we die.”

But Yahweh has revealed himself in my ears:

“Surely this guilt shall not be atoned for you  
until you die.”

The outcome of the movement is recorded both by the Old Testament and by Sennacherib. The latter relates that he first of all subdued Babylon and later came west. Here he first attacked the Phœnician King and subdued all his territory. He then received submission and tribute from certain near-by states and also from Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Ashdod. He next continued southward and overthrew the rebel cities of the Philistines. At this stage he was con-

fronted by a relieving army from Egypt, which he defeated at Eltekeh. He then completed the subjection of Ekron and secured the release of Padi, its King, who had been held captive in Jerusalem by Hezekiah. Judah and Jerusalem were finally attacked. Forty-six of its strong towns and fortresses were besieged and captured. Hezekiah was shut up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. Two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty captives and innumerable oxen, horses, cattle, etc., were taken as prey. Many of Judah's cities were turned over to Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza. A heavy indemnity was paid by Hezekiah; tribute was paid, and the lordship of Assyria recognised. Then Sennacherib was called back to his own land by the outbreak of fresh troubles there.

This report agrees in its essential features with that given in II Kings 18 : 14-16. But there are also given in Kings two further narratives which are

found also in duplicate in Isaiah 36 and 37. The version in Isaiah is generally admitted to be a later edition of the material found in Kings. The two stories so found in Isaiah are (1) 36 : 1-37 : 7 and 37 : 37 *f.* and (2) 37 : 9-36. These are duplicate stories of the same series of events. They represent the Assyrian as demanding the surrender of the capital; Hezekiah as sending in despair to Isaiah for aid; Isaiah as assuring the King of deliverance and as praying for Yahweh's intervention in behalf of Jerusalem; and Yahweh as smiting the besieging army by night with a fearful pestilence, thus fulfilling the prophet's prediction.

We note in this story certain puzzling elements. Why did Isaiah suddenly change his mind? Having denounced the whole movement toward revolt from the beginning, what made him change his attitude when precisely that which he had foretold took place? Tirhakah

(Isaiah 37 : 9) of Ethiopia was not King until 688 B. C., thirteen years after the event with which he is here connected. The number slain by pestilence in one night is without parallel in the records of plagues, even of the most virulent type. There is no allusion to any such marvellous deliverance of the city either in Sennacherib's account or in the book of Isaiah, aside from these chapters borrowed from the book of Kings. It is, therefore, not improbable that the actual course of events was that represented on the one hand by Sennacherib and on the other by II Kings 18 : 14-16; and that the balance of the story is due to that homiletical expansion for religious purposes to which much of the Hebrew history was sooner or later subjected.

Further pursuit of the political activities of the prophets would reveal Zephaniah interpreting the oncoming Scythian invasion as the advance host of the day of Yahweh; Jeremiah counselling



submission and surrender to Babylon when every drop of liberty-loving blood in Judah was crying out for resistance to the oppressor; Ezekiel preparing his fellow exiles for the fate of Jerusalem; Deutero-Isaiah predicting deliverance from exile and kindling faith in the light of Cyrus's career of conquest; and Haggai and Zechariah urging the rebuilding of the temple and predicting the establishment of the Messianic kingdom under Zerubbabel, because they interpreted the revolts after the death of Cambyses as portending the collapse of the Persian Empire.

In view of such facts as the foregoing it is evident that any successful study of prophecy must involve a careful study of history. The prophet was vitally interested in the politics of his day, both international and local. He needed to be a close student of the political situation. He could not and did not hold himself aloof from affairs of state. On

the contrary, he not infrequently thrust his advice upon his rulers unasked. His work, for the most part, fell in an age when the world was the prey of contending gods. It was his task to represent the claims of Yahweh in the conflict and to enforce them upon his people in general and the rulers in particular. This he sought to achieve by offering ever afresh an interpretation of past and present history from Yahweh's point of view. This involved upon the prophet's part more or less of constant adjustment and readjustment to the changing conditions of his day. The argument for Yahweh's claims that served one decade not uncommonly was useless for the succeeding decade. The prophet was forced by the issues with which he had to deal to change his standpoint from time to time and to enlarge his range of vision. Only so could he keep his religion in vital contact with the needs of his age. He was driven on by the

pressure of events to new discoveries. We see him ever moulding new truths upon the wheel of circumstance. He sought to shape history and succeeded better than he knew. But it is no less true that history likewise left its mark upon him. For his message was in large part given to him by the circumstances of his times. Out of them he read the will of God and in them he saw the hand of God at work.

When political disaster threatened his people, the prophet utilised the occasion to urge upon them Yahweh's demand for social morality and spiritual worship. Calamity was but Yahweh's chastisement for sin. New moral ideals and loftier spiritual aims were brought forth under the castigation of the enemy's rod. By responding to the demands of Yahweh thus enforced, the prophet sought, as it were, to force Yahweh to be gracious. When Israel, in the face of repeated misfortune and long-continued oppression at

the hands of her foes, began to doubt whether or not Yahweh was after all worthy of the confidence placed in him and whether other gods might not be more powerful, then the prophet met the situation by making Yahweh the God of the world and denying the reality of all other gods. In the movement toward this monotheistic standpoint, it is probable that prophecy was aided by the familiarity with world-embracing conceptions forced upon them by the long-continued conflict with Assyria, the great world-power. When, accepting this point of view, Israel raised the further question as to the justice of a God who could permit even more wicked peoples to chastise and triumph over his own relatively just and pious nation, the prophet responded with a new conception of Israel's mission in the world and a new interpretation of the significance of her suffering; see the descriptions of the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 40-55.

Such contact with the world at large was indispensable to the life of the prophet. His function was essentially national. He needed the free air of all out-of-doors and the stimulus of world movements to keep the spiritual life vigorous and healthy. This kept him from becoming narrow and petty in his aims and sympathies. The history of prophecy is sufficient proof of this. Not till Israel got ready to assume the responsibility of nationality did the prophet proper appear in her life. The classical period of prophecy was the age during which Assyria was remaking the map of western Asia and little Israel was making the gallant fight for independence. When that independence was finally and hopelessly lost, prophecy died. The prophet made an inestimable contribution to the life of his state; but the life of the state was an imperative necessity to the prophet.

*Not at all  
This man has  
not read his  
little -*

## VII

### THE PROPHET AND THE INDIVIDUAL<sup>1</sup>

THE centre of the prophet's interest was always the welfare of the nation. His concern was with national problems, perils, and hopes. The interests of individuals, as such, were below the level of his gaze; they came into view only in so far as they affected the public weal. The early soothsayer or seer was, to be sure, in touch with individual life and primarily concerned therein; but the great, outstanding figures of the classical period of prophecy had larger interests at heart. And yet when the individual finally came to his own in Hebrew thought he received the recognition of

<sup>1</sup> First printed under the title, "The Rise of Individualism among the Hebrews," in *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. X (1906), pp. 251-266.

his rights at the hands of the prophets.

In early Israel, as among all other primitive Semitic peoples,<sup>1</sup> the solidarity of the family, clan, or tribe was so ingrained in the whole life and thought as to render it extremely difficult for the consciousness of individuality and personality to assert itself and vindicate its rights. The idea of solidarity finds expression everywhere in the early Hebrew literature. Familiar illustrations of its prevalence and power are seen in the case of the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram with their wives and children (Num. 16 : 27 ff.); in the punishment of Achan and his entire family for the theft of the "goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold" (Joshua

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. R. Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 32 ff., 274; and *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 25 ff. The feeling of the solidarity of the clan has persisted in Palestine down to the present day and is a recognised principle there in the administration of Turkish law; see Baldensperger, in *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, January, 1906, p. 14.

7 : 16–26); in Saul’s massacre of the entire population of the city of Nob (I Sam. 22 : 16–19); in the hanging of the children of Rizpah and Michal to expiate the crime of their grandfather Saul (II Sam. 21 : 1–9); in the common practice of blood-revenge (II Sam. 3 : 27–30; 14 : 6–11; Ex. 22 : 2 *f.*; Num. 35 : 9–34; Deut. 19 : 6; Joshua 20 : 3, etc); in the judicial murder of Naboth’s sons along with their father (II Kings 9 : 26); in the phraseology of the second commandment, “visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me” (Ex. 20 : 5; Deut. 5 : 9; *cf.* Ex. 34 : 7 and Num. 14 : 18); and in the common belief of later times that Israel’s sufferings were due to the sins of Manasseh (Jer. 15 : 4; 23 : 26; 24 : 3; 31 : 29; Ezek. 18 : 2). The fact that Amaziah, King of Judah, did not avenge the murder of his father upon the children of the murderers is cited



in II Kings 14 : 6 as a departure from the ordinary custom.<sup>1</sup> The persistence of the doctrine even down to the latest period is attested by the stories of the hanging of Haman's ten sons (Esther 9 : 13 *f.*) and of the casting of Daniel's accusers and their families with them into the lions' den (Daniel 6 : 25).<sup>2</sup> Prophecy itself was dominated by this conception; in its earlier stages the nation was always thought of as standing or falling as a whole. This in some measure accounts for the intensity and passion of the prophet's denunciations of the wicked—the evil consequences of their deeds are not confined to themselves and their descendants, but involve the destruction of the whole people, good as

<sup>1</sup> This verse as it now stands is, of course, the work of the redactor, but there is no sufficient reason to doubt the fact here chronicled. Cf. the remarks of Kittel and Benzinger, *ad. loc.*

<sup>2</sup> The question of the historicity of these stories does not materially affect their bearing upon our topic. The fact that these stories are told with approval carries with it an acceptance of the justice of the custom in accordance with which children were punished for the sins of their parents.

well as bad. Many influences combined were necessary to effect a modification and weakening of this controlling sentiment such as to make room for the growth of ideas concerning individual worth and responsibility in the sight of God.

We may not conclude, however, that the individual was wholly without recognition in early Hebrew life. There are too many evidences to the contrary for that, even if such a stage of social development could be found anywhere. The individual has never and nowhere been able to sink himself wholly in the social mass; there is and always has been a certain area of personal experience which differentiates him from all others. The mass, on the other hand, is and always has been conscious of certain differentiating characteristics in the members of which it is composed, and has shown this recognition of personality by its willingness to follow certain men as leaders

in various kinds of activity. The Hebrews were no exception to this rule. Alongside of the abundant evidence of the dominance of the feeling of social and religious solidarity in the early literature of Israel, there is found similar proof of the fact that individuals were valued for their work's sake, and that they in turn felt themselves, at least at times, to be the objects of Yahweh's care and were not afraid to ask for personal favours; see, *e. g.*, I Sam. 1 : 10 *ff.*; 17 : 37. Stories like those regarding Gideon and Jephthah clearly demonstrate the place accorded to forceful men because of their ability; and the many personal names that are compounds of the name Yahweh show the strong hold Yahweh had upon the personal religious life; *e. g.*, Jonathan = Yahweh has given; Joshua = Yahweh has delivered. But, granting everything of this sort, it remains true that in early Israel the rights of the individual, especially in the

sphere of religious and ethical thought, had not come to full recognition.

Among the influences working toward the complete habilitation of the individual as an individual, one of the earliest and most persistent was the social and industrial life of Canaan itself. The clan spirit and organisation of nomadic life could not continue indefinitely in the midst of the settled life of Canaan. Landownership necessarily tended to become individual rather than commercial. Agricultural life, with its diversity of industry, naturally brought the individual to the front. The growth of large towns, like Jerusalem, Samaria, and Bethel, furnished greater scope for individual effort and enterprise. The ever-increasing ramifications of trade and commerce constantly afforded new fields for the development of individual talent.<sup>1</sup> Intercourse and amalgamation with the earlier inhabitants, the necessity of learning

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Day, *The Social Life of the Hebrews* (1901), p. 66.

from them the art of agriculture, and especially the relations established between the Israelite and the "stranger," all helped to hasten the deterioration of the clan.

The establishment of monarchical government operated to the same effect. The monarch and his house waxed strong at the expense of the clans.<sup>1</sup> In the organisation of the army, clan ties were largely disregarded; the basis of organisation was numerical, not tribal; there were captains of fifties, of hundreds, and of thousands (I Sam. 8 : 12; II Sam. 18 : 1 *f.*; II Kings 1 : 9-13). To military positions of honour and responsibility individuals were appointed, not on the basis of tribal affinities, but because of merit evidenced by conspicuous deeds of valour, loyalty, and efficiency (II Sam. 23 : 8-39). The very existence of a standing army necessitated the absence of a comparatively large number of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Day, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

farmers and citizens from their homes and the consequent weakening of family ties (*cf.* II Sam. 8 : 6, 14). The forced labour employed upon public works by Solomon and his successors withdrew many more from their clan associations for long periods (I Sam. 8 : 16). In Solomon's organisation of the kingdom into twelve districts the clan and tribal limits seem to have been disregarded (I Kings 4 : 7-19). The establishment of the national capital at Jerusalem and the erection there of the royal temple drew visitors, traders, and residents from all parts of the kingdom; this migratory movement was greatly intensified as a result of the centralisation of worship effected in Josiah's reign. The free intercourse and interchange of ideas thus arising was a great educative influence tending to do away with clannishness and narrow provincialism and to elevate many individuals to a higher plane of thought and feeling. Everything which

strengthened the bonds of national unity at the same time hastened the dissolution of the clan organisation and the weakening of clan loyalty.

In addition to these and other social, economic, and political influences, there were ethical and religious forces at work preparing the way for the incoming of individualism. The sage was essentially individualistic both in the method and the substance of his teaching.<sup>1</sup> He con-

<sup>1</sup> The Wisdom literature is, of course, of postexilic origin; hence it might be inferred that the activity of the sages was an outcome of the adoption of the individualistic point of view rather than an efficient factor in the development of that point of view. It is scarcely supposable, however, that a type of literature so rich in content and so widely differing from all that had preceded it could have sprung up, as it were, in a night, independently of any preparatory work. It is easier to believe that the Wisdom thought had representatives in the earlier period of Hebrew history, and that this school found its great opportunity for influence in the conditions of the exilic and postexilic periods and at that time came to the front in literary activity. Hints to this effect are not wanting; *e. g.*, Joab employed a "wise woman" to rebuke David (II Sam. 14 : 2 *ff.*); another "wise woman" advised the yielding of Sheba, the Benjamite, to Joab (II Sam. 20 : 16 *ff.*); tradition ascribed unparalleled "wisdom" to Solomon (I Kings 5 : 29-34; 10 : 4 *ff.*; Prov. 25 : 1); and in Jeremiah's time the wise men are clearly differentiated as a recognised class ranking along with the priest and the prophet (Jer. 18 : 18).



cerned himself with the common, practical interests of ordinary, every-day life. He met men face to face on the streets and at the city gates and gave them counsel on matters arising from their relations to each other as individuals. All his work laid emphasis upon the moral responsibilities of individuals; he had nothing to do with men in the mass, but confined himself to the individual member of society and, for the most part, apparently, to the affairs of private life. The whole trend and influence of his work from the outset must have been individualistic to a high degree. The outcome of his activity as seen in the Wisdom literature, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus—the most individualistic books in the Old Testament—is sufficient warrant for the claim that the teachings of the earlier sages exerted a predominantly individualistic influence.

The function of the priesthood, like-



wise, though primarily national, was not without its individualistic features. The early priest was the attendant at the sanctuary of the clan or tribe. This function as minister of the community persisted all through Israel's history; it appears, for example, in the case of Micah's Levite (Judges 18 : 19 *f.*); of Eli, priest of the sanctuary at Shiloh; of Samuel sacrificing at Gilgal and at Bethlehem (I Sam. 11 : 14; 16 : 1-13); of the priesthood at the royal shrines of Bethel and Jerusalem; and especially of the priesthood of the second temple. But, in connection with his duties in this capacity, the priest sustained important relations toward the individual members of his community. To him fell the task of adjudicating between them in both secular and religious matters. It was his function to instruct them as to their ceremonial obligations in connection with sacrifices and offerings, to see to the observance of the regulations

concerning clean and unclean, and to inspect personally all cases of leprosy and prescribe the course to be pursued. In these and many other ways he was brought constantly into contact with individuals, and through this sort of experience must have gained some conception of the relation of the individual to God. The legislation of the Covenant and Deuteronomic Codes, moreover, was the expression in statutory form of the earlier priestly teachings and practices, and the codification of these laws was itself the work of the priest. Much of this legislation, both ritualistic and secular, in the very nature of the case, deals with individual matters. The administration of justice is necessarily individualistic in tendency.<sup>1</sup> The rights of the individual as such inevitably assert themselves sooner or later. The injustice of punishing one man for the crimes committed by another, even though they

<sup>1</sup> See Cornill, *Das Buch Jeremia erklärt* (1905), p. 347.

may be of the same blood, cannot be overlooked for long in a progressive community. The proper relation between crime and punishment is maintained only when it is the criminal himself who suffers the punishment. The truth of this could not be felt in the sphere of civil and criminal law without at the same time coming to recognition in the interpretation of the divine administration of justice, especially among a people who recognised no distinctions of sacred and secular in law, for whom all law was of divine origin and authority. Furthermore, the "obedience, worship, and love of the heart demanded by Deuteronomy on the ground of common union with Jehovah were bound at length to manifest themselves as a *personal* experience and privilege known besides to God himself alone." <sup>1</sup> It is not without significance in this connection that the

<sup>1</sup> McCurdy, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*<sup>2</sup> (1911), § 1025.

## 182 PROPHET AND HIS PROBLEMS

great prophetic exponent of the principle of individualism was not only a prophet, but was by birth and training a priest (Ezek. 1 : 3; 4 : 12-15).

Prophecy, too, though its scope and purpose were fundamentally national, held within itself the germ of individualism.<sup>1</sup> The idea of the remnant itself, whether it originated with Elijah or Isaiah,<sup>2</sup> was a starting-point for individualism. The idea carries with it a distinction between Israel according to flesh and Israel according to spirit, even if Israel according to spirit consist only of those who are also in Israel according to flesh; the remnant of the Elijah stories, for example, consisted of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal; Isaiah's remnant included his disciples and those faithful to the great prophetic ideals. Membership in the

<sup>1</sup> Srend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*<sup>2</sup> (1899), pp. 199 ff., 308.

<sup>2</sup> See Meinhold, *Studien zur israelitischen Religionsgeschichte*, vol. I, "Der heilige Rest" (1903).

remnant, and through this a place in the future glorified Israel, was made dependent, therefore, not solely upon the fact of being an Israelite, but also upon faithfulness to the ideals of true Yahweh worship. Thus, in addition to the accident of birth as a Hebrew, there was set up a standard of character, and such a standard is in the nature of the case individualistic.

The continual insistence by the prophets upon ethical ideals was another step in the direction of individualism. Though the ethics of the prophets was social in intent and purpose, the basis of it, as of all ethics, was individualistic; and the prophets' application of these ethical principles to the conditions of their times was emphatically individualistic. Corporations, syndicates, trusts, trades-unions, and the other multiform organisations of the present day were unknown to them; the sins they denounced were sins of individuals and

were to be opposed only by individualistic preaching of the most personal type.<sup>1</sup> Samuel denouncing Saul, Nathan laying bare the crime of David to the eye of his own conscience, Elijah fiercely opposing the despotic oppression of Ahab and Jezebel, Amos proclaiming unwelcome truths before the chief priest at Bethel, Isaiah confronting and confounding kings and princes—these are examples of the kind of service rendered by the true prophets. Among the leaders of Israel, immunity from such attacks as these was assured only to the possessors of sound moral character. Of the same personal nature was the use made by the prophets—*e. g.*, in the J and E documents—of the stories concerning the great individuals of Israel's past; the praiseworthy characteristics of Abraham, Moses, and David were described and emphasised for the admiration and inspiration of succeeding generations.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Smend, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

It was the task of exilic prophecy to gather up these scattered threads of influence and weave them into the great doctrine of individualism. The times were ripe for the formulation and utterance of this doctrine. Political ambitions had been dashed to the ground. The death of Josiah and the calamity of 597 B. C. must have destroyed, for the time being, the last vestige of hope for Israel's *political* future. The attention of thoughtful men could no longer linger upon the nation as a political unit, but was turned to the consideration of its religious mission. Religion became the great issue of life; all other questions were merely of secondary importance; the best thought concerned itself with the problems of religion. These problems necessitated the formation of new conceptions of God. The course of recent historical events had to be considered from the point of view of Yahweh's relation to them. Even if Yahweh were



only a national deity like other national gods, such as Chemosh, Milcom, and Marduk, the fact of Israel's successive disasters permitted two methods of explanation: either Yahweh was inferior in power to the god whose people had overthrown Israel, or Yahweh was angry with his people for some offence against his majesty, and had therefore withdrawn his favour from them and left them to the mercy of the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Some were doubtless ready to accept the former alternative and transfer their allegiance from Yahweh to the god of the conquerors. But the prophets, with unswerving loyalty to Yahweh, unhesi-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the explanation given by the Babylonian priests of the capture of Babylon by the Persians, viz., that Marduk was angry at his people and therefore delivered them into the hands of their enemies; see the prologue of the Cyrus Cylinder (translated in R. F. Harper's *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature* [1901], pp. 171 ff.), wherein Marduk is represented as having become "furious with anger" and as forsaking his land, which he turns over to Cyrus. The characteristic difference between the Babylonian and the Hebrew explanations of their very similar experiences is that the anger of Marduk is occasioned by ritualistic offences; e. g., "he (Nabonidus) allowed the regular offering to cease"; while Yahweh's wrath is aroused by gross violations of moral and spiritual law.



tatingly chose the latter alternative and declared Israel to be at fault in having disregarded Yahweh's demand for righteousness and truth; and, not content with this, they enlarged the sphere of Yahweh's activity to world-wide proportions and pointed out that the Assyrian and Babylonian armies were but tools in Yahweh's hands for the execution of his wrath upon Israel. Thus in the hour of his apparent overthrow, Yahweh became King of kings and Lord of lords. Israel was now only one among the nations, all of whom were subject to the dominion of Yahweh; but she was still his ancient people and, therefore, the most highly favoured of all. It was coming to be seen, however, that the basis of this closer fellowship was to be found not in any clan or family relationship but rather in the moral and spiritual superiority of Israel as compared with all other peoples. The national communion with Yahweh being thus conditioned by

a character qualification, the individualising of the relationship between him and his people was bound to follow in due course.

The gradual breaking down of the old conception of the solidarity of the nation was hastened under the stress of the intense sufferings of the exilic period. The common opinion seems to have been that the present generation was paying the penalty of the sins committed in Manasseh's reign (Jer. 15 : 4; II Kings 21 : 2, 11, 16 *f.*; 23 : 26; 24 : 3 *f.*). The popular estimate of the fairness of this principle of the divine administration of justice found expression in the ironical, half-sceptical proverb "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18 : 2; *cf.* Jer. 31 : 29). The spirit of the times was evidently opposed to the practice of such doctrine. The dissolution of the doctrine was aided by the conditions resulting from the deportation of

597 B. C.; family ties were ruthlessly sundered and the lines of clan demarcation ignored; individuals were uprooted from their native soil and transplanted in a foreign land. Many of those remaining behind were robbed of practically all their kinsmen and former associates, and were under the sad necessity of beginning life anew almost alone. Each had to stand or fall upon his own merits in the new business and social conditions.

Amid such conditions as these Jeremiah did his work. He realised that the prevalent tendency to cast the responsibility for present difficulties upon the shoulders of a former generation robbed the divine chastisements of all educative moral and spiritual effect for the great mass of his contemporaries. Hence he never wearied of pointing out the sinfulness of his contemporaries (2 : 19 *ff.*; 3 : 1 *ff.*; 5 : 1 *ff.*; 6 : 6 *ff.*; 8 : 6; 13 : 22 *f.*; 17 : 1 *f.*; etc.), endeavouring thus

to bring home to their consciences the conviction that they themselves had by their own deeds merited all the punishment they were receiving, and were altogether in error in supposing themselves any better than their predecessors. Following in the same strain, later commentators on Jeremiah charged the people of Judah with being even worse than their fathers (Jer. 7: 26; 11 : 10), and Ezekiel (16 : 51) declared them to be twice as wicked as the people of Samaria had been before the fall of the northern kingdom. Jeremiah exposed sin in the hope of showing its exceeding sinfulness in such a way as to cause Israel to loathe it and repent, and on condition of true repentance he assured them of Yahweh's forgiveness (3 : 12 *f.*; 4 : 1, 3 *ff.*; 8 : 4 *ff.*; etc.). This offer of forgiveness on condition of repentance was in itself an assurance that Israel's fate was in its own hands; it was in direct contradiction to the popular thought that the nation was

doomed because of the sins of a previous generation—a thought the prevalence of which meant the death of all moral progress. According to Jeremiah, each generation determined its own fate by its attitude toward Yahweh and his demands for ethical righteousness and spiritual worship, without any let or hindrance due to the rebellious deeds of previous generations. This position seems to be the furthest point reached by Jeremiah in the direction of individual responsibility; for the great passage, 31 : 29 f., even if it could be shown to be original,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The grounds for assigning this passage to a later period are well set forth by Smend, *op. cit.*, pp. 249 ff.; so also Stade, Duhm, Schmidt (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, col. 2384), Cornill, (*Die metrischen Stücke des Buches Jeremia reconstituirt* [1901], and in *Das Buch Jeremia erklärt* [1905], pp. 346–8), *et al.* For the contrary view see Giesebrecht, *in loc.* The only passages in Jeremiah that can by any means be cited in support of the thesis that Jeremiah preached individualism are 31 : 29 ff.; 3 : 14–16; 15 : 1 ff.; 12 : 1 ff.; 17 : 9 f.; and 32 : 18 f. These are all assigned, wholly or in part, to a later age by Duhm, Cornill, Schmidt, *et al.* In addition to the specific ground urged against each of these passages by these interpreters, a general objection presents itself to all. These scattered hints of individualism have no vital connection with the prophecies of Jeremiah at any point; they form no part of the burden of his soul. It is scarcely conceivable that a prophet of Jere-

evidently recognises the necessity of the operation of the old principle of solidarity in the existing régime, and postpones the introduction of the new doctrine of individualism until the incoming of the Messianic age.

Individualism was for the first time clearly defined and enunciated by Ezekiel, the younger contemporary of Jeremiah. His environment was especially favourable to the development of this doctrine. Torn away from home and his native land in his youth, he was plunged at once into the midst of Baby-

miah's insight and capacity, confronted by great problems in ethics and religion, and having possession of a profound truth adapted to their solution, should have contented himself with a few incidental, lifeless allusions to it, displaying no enthusiasm concerning it and making no practical use of it. Moreover, Jeremiah was still dealing with the nation. His activities were practically ended before the nation had ceased to be. Hence the whole motive and background of his work were necessarily national. His contemporaries clung to the national idea as long as there was a vestige of hope. Indeed, the ambition for existence and power as a nation among the nations of the earth did not fail until the final fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews to all quarters of the earth in 70 A. D. The national spirit blazed forth fiercely again in the days of the Maccabees and occasioned numerous revolts against the Romans up to the end.

lonian power and influence. The contrast between the might and splendour of the conqueror and the weakness and poverty of his own people must have made a deep impression upon him. He abandoned all hope of successful resistance and strove to prepare his people for the inevitable catastrophe, seeking to turn their thoughts away from political hopes and intrigues, and to concentrate them upon the affairs of the moral and spiritual realm in which they might still maintain supremacy. The community of his fellow exiles was constituted upon an individualistic basis; the conquerors had selected for deportation the leaders of the nation's thought and action (II Kings 24 : 14-16) with slight reference to clan and family ties (Ezek. 24 : 21). These were naturally the most enlightened and intelligent citizens, and therefore most likely to be hospitable toward a new truth.

Furthermore, the probable lack of any



facilities for public worship on the part of the Jews in Babylonia,<sup>1</sup> who could not visit the temple at Jerusalem, the only place where men ought to worship, of itself prepared the soil of their hearts for the seed of individualism. Shorn of opportunity for worship as a member of the community to which he belonged, the devout Jew would inevitably be thrown back upon the necessity of lifting his own thoughts and desires to Yahweh's throne in the privacy of his own solitude. The passing of the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary about 620 B. C. would tend in this direction even while the Jews were still in the homeland, but its full effect was not felt until the exile, because, on the one hand, there was always the possibility of visit-

<sup>1</sup> The recent discovery that the Jews in Egypt built a temple of their own at Assuan does not necessarily involve the existence of corresponding Yahweh shrines in Babylonia. The Assuan colony was of much older origin than the Babylonian and may represent a period when the Deuteronomic law had not yet secured full recognition. Yet the discovery of this Egyptian temple makes it more probable that the Babylonian Jews also had one or more sanctuaries.



ing the temple, which was easily accessible to all the inhabitants of Judah, and, on the other hand, it may not be supposed that the associations and customs of the local sanctuaries were at once and completely abandoned when Deuteronomy became the authorised law.

In addition to these conditions there was a very positive influence toward individualism from the side of the Babylonian civilisation, which was centuries in advance of the Hebrew. As far back as the days of Hammurabi, and how much further no one can tell, the Babylonians had been a commercial people. Even in early times their business activities were highly complex, ramifying in all directions, and their business methods were precise and accurate, giving scope for executive ability of the highest order. The Code of Hammurabi takes cognisance of banking transactions, trustees, agents, or commercial travellers, renting and

subrenting, receipts, etc.; requires a written contract with regularly attested signatures and witnesses for every business transaction; and gives evidence of the existence of a thorough and well-developed system of legal procedure. The social organisation reflected by the code is unintelligible apart from the recognition of the well-defined rights and responsibilities of the individual citizen. There are, indeed, regulations in the code which seem to imply the older feeling of the solidarity of the family, as, for example, the provision in §§116 and 210, for putting to death the child of a man who has caused the death of another man's child. But these are instances to be explained as due to the influence of the *lex talionis*—an old principle which carried along with it other ancient usages. A civilisation as advanced and complex as that of Babylonia in the twenty-second century B. C. was certainly not less but more so in the sixth century B. C., when

Israel began its Babylonian sojourn and Ezekiel was formulating his doctrine of the responsibility of the individual. This *a priori* assumption is shown to be correct by the indubitable evidence of the hundreds of contract tablets coming from every period of Assyro-Babylonian history, many of them from the reigns of Nebuchadrezzar and his successors and recording business transactions of the most varied and complex character. There can be no question that in the commercial life of Babylonia in Ezekiel's time each individual stood absolutely upon his own merits. But even in modern times it is impossible to keep business and religion separate in the life and thought of any individual. Human nature does not readily resolve itself into a series of water-tight compartments. The various activities of life inevitably intermingle and react one upon another. This truth as applied to business and religion was even more true in the an-

cient world than now; then religion embraced every phase of human life, the separation of the sacred from the secular scarcely having been imagined. Hence it is difficult to conceive of a commercial system organised on a strictly individualistic basis coexisting indefinitely side by side with a religious system dominated by the ancient conception of the solidarity of the family or clan. Individualism could hardly invade the commercial and industrial system without obtaining foothold likewise in the territory of religion. Bousset<sup>1</sup> has already called attention to the "astrologic fatalism" of the Babylonians as a specifically "individualistic form of religion." Their penitential psalms also reflect a very keen sense of personal guilt and personal responsibility for the same. Definite expression to the doctrine of individual responsibility for sin is given

<sup>1</sup> In *Die Religion des Judenthums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (1903), p. 278.

in the narrative of the deluge,<sup>1</sup> where the god Ea addresses the god Bel as follows:

Ah, thou wise one among the gods, thou warrior,  
 How rash of thee to bring about a flood storm!  
 On the sinner visit his sin,  
 And on the wicked his wickedness.  
 But be merciful, forbear; let not all be destroyed!  
 Be considerate; let not everything be [confounded]!

This is the beginning of a distinct protest against the injustice of destroying the righteous with the wicked, in the

<sup>1</sup> Gilgamesh Epic, tablet XI, ll. 180 ff. The rendering given above is that of Doctor Wm. Muss-Arnolt, as found in R. F. Harper's *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature* (1901), p. 357. Samuel Daiches, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, April, 1905, pp. 441-455, maintains that Ezekiel, especially in 14 : 12-20, borrowed both language and ideas from the Babylonian flood story; but the mere fact of similarity of expression is not of itself sufficient to demonstrate literary dependence. Daiches recognises the fact that similar phraseology occurs in Ezek. 14 : 12-20; Deut. 28 : 15-68; Lev. 26. It is too much to suppose that all of these are directly or indirectly dependent upon the Babylonian narrative, and it is not necessary to posit such an origin for any one of them. The phenomena upon which the hypothesis is based are simple, such as might be expected to appear among any peoples dwelling amid similar environments.

form of a plea that some punishment other than a deluge, one which would render possible the escape of the righteous, be employed. [With the inheritance of the religious experience of Israel during the preceding centuries, and amid such a social and intellectual environment as Babylonia furnished, it was perfectly natural that Israel in exile should respond to the stimulus of providential circumstances in part by the clear formulation of the doctrine of personal responsibility for sin.

Ezekiel's individualism appears first in his statement of his divine call (3 : 16-21).<sup>1</sup> Previous prophets had felt them-

<sup>1</sup> Kraetzschmar considers this passage a later addition derived from chapter 33 and inapplicable to the first period of Ezekiel's activity. Prior to the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel certainly did give greatest attention to the national phases of his work, exposing sins and emphasising the certainty and necessity of the fall of the capital, but his individualism was not held wholly in abeyance. The new point of view appears clearly, indeed, in 9 : 4 *f.*; 11 : 18-21; 14 : 12 *ff.*; and chapter 18. In reply to the charge that 3 : 16-21 forms no essential part of the call, but is an appendix, it is to be said that in representing this phase of his mission as the subject of a second revelation Ezekiel meant to indicate that the necessity of preaching to the individual was not at first realised by him

selves called as Yahweh's messengers to the nation and guides of the national life. Ezekiel defines his mission as that of caring for the souls of individuals. He is the watchman appointed of Yahweh unto the house of Israel to warn each man of his danger and indicate the way of escape. His own feeling of personal responsibility to Yahweh for the souls of those intrusted to his care is very marked and evidences his keen conscientiousness. He puts himself on the same plane with his hearers and asks them to bear no heavier burdens

but forced itself upon him only after deep meditation upon the needs of the times. This view is in keeping with the fact of Ezekiel's concrete and artificial methods of presenting truth. It is not necessary to suppose that Ezekiel's description of his call was given at the opening of his ministry; it was more probably written after some experience in prophetic activity and sums up his reflections upon the nature of his work and the attitude of the people toward his teachings (*cf.* the visions of Isaiah and Amos). This is rendered more than probable by the fact that in 21 : 3 *f.* Ezekiel announces a destruction upon Jerusalem which shall cut off both the righteous and the wicked without discrimination. This latter prophecy seems to be a spontaneous utterance spoken under the pressure of the immediate circumstances, while 3 : 16-21 and chapter 18, with which it is in conflict, are evidently the product of careful thought and reflection (see Bertholet and Kraetzschmar on 21 : 3 *f.*).



than he is conscious of bearing himself. He was confronted by the same problem as that which presented itself to Jeremiah—viz., the necessity of demonstrating Yahweh's justice to a sceptical generation—but he offered a new solution. He laid down the basal principle that every soul sustains its own independent relation to Yahweh (18 : 4). On the basis of this personal relation its fate will be determined. In the approaching crisis every soul that is sinful will be doomed, while every one that is just will escape alive. The righteousness of a father will be of no avail to shield a sinful son, nor will the sins of a wicked father be visited upon the head of a righteous son (18 : 5–20). One man's crimes do not bring judgment upon another, nor, conversely, does the righteousness of one man secure immunity for the sins of other men (14 : 12–23).<sup>1</sup> A man's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jer. 15 : 1 ff. (a later addition). Contrast with this the earlier view as represented in Gen. 18.



ancestors, therefore, have in no way interfered with his relations to Yahweh so as to impair his right to an absolutely just judgment based solely upon his own merits. But, more than this, a man's own past life even does not count in the coming judgment; the only thing taken into consideration is his actual status at the time the judgment is passed (18 : 21-28; 33 : 10-20). This warrants a most earnest appeal to the sinner to repent and to the righteous man to maintain his integrity, especially since Yahweh derives no pleasure from the death of sinners (33 : 11 *f.*).

In these utterances Ezekiel apparently breaks loose entirely from the old conception of the solidarity of the family and, carried away by the enthusiasm of a new idea, passes over to the opposite extreme of an individualism of the most atomistic type—atomistic not only from the point of view of social ethics and life but even from the point of view of the

individual life itself. The fact of the essential unity and continuity of each life is ignored; life is considered from the point of view of actions, not character. The ties of heredity and environment which link a man to his fellow men, and often involve the innocent with the guilty in temporal disaster, are not given due consideration.

It may be noted further that Ezekiel's application of the doctrine of individualism was confined to the question of man's status before the bar of divine judgment. For the thought of personal communion and fellowship of the individual with his God he finds no place. Nor did he ever arrive at the thought of the individual as Yahweh's representative to the world. Notwithstanding his great emphasis upon the idea of individualism, he never loosened his hold upon the thought of Yahweh as fundamentally in union with Israel's land; it runs through all his utterances (chapter 16; 20 : 40; 25 : 14;

28 : 24-26; 35 : 10; 36 : 16-38; chapters 38 and 39; 43 : 7).<sup>1</sup> Israel is still the most favoured nation; Yahweh's activities are always exercised with reference to it. His true worshippers are always Israelites. There is a spiritual Israel, indeed, but it is at the same time made up of those who belong to Israel according to the flesh, the Hebrews of the Hebrews.

Ezekiel's vision of the Israel of the future (chapters 40-48) grows out of his feeling of the solidarity of Israel and Yahweh. The new Israel will be a community of true Israelites dwelling with Yahweh in the Holy City. Yahweh will be the real head of the community, the centre of all its interests; the community will be Yahweh's representative in the eyes of the world at large. Israel as a religious unit will take the place of Israel as a political unit. Thus Ezekiel finds the highest expression of religion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bertholet, *Das Buch Hesekiel*, p. xviii.

not in the isolated life of the individual but in the group life of the community. His community is, of course, composed of individual members all of whom sustain right relations to God; they live, however, not for individual ends but for the furtherance of the purpose of the community, which is the revelation of God's glory to the world.

The principle of individualism was incorporated also in the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 24 : 16) and so became the established principle in the administration of Hebrew justice. This is an advance upon Deut. 7 : 10 in which nothing is implied as to whether the descendants may or may not suffer for their ancestors' sins, it being made clear only that the sinner himself shall not escape punishment. It is also practically a setting aside of the principle laid down in the Decalogue (Deut. 5 : 9; Ex. 20 : 5).<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Driver's attempt to escape the contradiction by explaining Deut. 5 : 9 as applicable to "the providence of God acting

Deuteronomic law was, therefore, the outcome of, or the result of a development parallel with, the pioneer activity of Ezekiel<sup>1</sup> rather than the basis upon which his work rested.

This study of the rise of individualism among the Hebrews, and particularly of the prophet's share in that movement of thought, shows the ability of the prophet to adjust himself to changing scenes and problems. A transfer of emphasis from the nation or the family as the religious unit to the individual was essential to the salvation of religion for thinking men in the days of the exile. The prophet met this crisis fearlessly and efficiently, as he had met previous crises, and in so doing marked a new stage in the progress of his religion. This was

naturally through the normal constitution of society," and 24 : 16 as applying only to the administration of justice by the state, seems to overlook the fact that in the Hebrew state the administrators of human law were the earthly representatives of Yahweh, and that fundamentally *all* law was divine law; separation of church from state was not yet effected.

<sup>1</sup>So Bertholet, *Deuteronomium*, p. 76, and Carpenter and Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (1900), vol. II, p. 284.

the kind of test that brought out the vitality of the prophetic religion, with which our concluding chapter deals.

## VIII

### THE PROPHET'S RELIGION

WE shall not attempt to set forth in a single chapter either the content or the history of the religion of the prophets; either would require a substantial volume. We must confine ourselves to sketching a few of the leading characteristics of that religion, familiarity with which would insure the recognition of prophetic religion wherever and whenever it might appear. The chapter will thus constitute a kind of miniature introduction to the prophet's religion.

A mere speaking acquaintance with the prophets brings out the fact of their vivid consciousness of God. They thought of themselves as living in God's world. They believed themselves to be always under his eye. He was their

ever-present God and never a God afar off. Yet that presence and nearness they would never have described as the modern poet has done:

Closer is he than breathing,  
Nearer than hands or feet.

Their God was too distinctly and concretely personal to have been thus abstractly represented. He was a tangible, objective personality standing out in sharp relief against the personalities of his worshippers. He stood outside of them, and communication between him and them was correspondingly represented in a markedly anthropomorphic manner. That which distinguished the prophet from other men was his ability to recognise the hand and voice of God in the life of the day. He was in the highest degree sensitive to the presence of God. He responded to the call of God like steel to the magnet. He could distinguish the divine voice amid the babel of



human sounds as quickly as the mother recognises her child. He lived in constant expectation of that voice; his ear was always open for the divine word and his eye was never closed to God's work. He spoke not in his own strength but in the strength of God. His only mission in life was to be the spokesman of God. According to his own conception of his function, he was faithful and true to his call in proportion as he spake the whole revelation of God and naught besides. The Hebrew prophet was thus in a very literal sense "the man of God," called of God, inspired of God, and sustained of God. God was for him the most real element in his environment. A life of increasing communion with the Lord of all life was the prophet's daily experience.

Another characteristic feature of the prophet's religion lies in the large place it gave to faith. Prophecy dealt not with certainties but with hopes, not with

the fixed past but with the changing present and the still more uncertain future. Yet amid changing circumstance and fluctuating opinion the prophet was upheld by a sense of certainty. While others lost heart and yielded to despair he lived in confidence "as seeing him who is invisible." Few things in history are as marvellous as the firmness of the prophet's grip upon the unseen. In spite of apparent failure and in the face of seemingly insuperable difficulty and inevitable defeat, the faith of the prophet remained serene and immovable. It rose supreme above every doubt and grew richer in content with each successive trial.

Illustration of this fact is furnished in the career of practically every prophet, but we must satisfy ourselves with two or three specific cases. Isaiah was pre-eminently a prophet of faith. His lot was cast in troublous times. No man knew what a day might bring forth. The

minds of men were distracted. Some sought help in one direction, some in another, but through it all Isaiah preached and practised faith in Yahweh alone. This was his message to Ahaz when the armies of Israel and Syria threatened Jerusalem and "the heart of Ahaz trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble before the wind" (Isaiah 7 : 2). Isaiah, standing practically alone, was able to say with the full assurance of confidence: "Take care and be calm; fear not neither let thine heart be faint. . . . It shall not stand neither shall it come to pass. . . . If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (7 : 4-9). But Ahaz craved more tangible support and could not be dissuaded from sending "messengers to Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son. Come up and deliver me from the hand of the King of Syria, and from the hand of the King of Israel, who

have risen up against me" (II Kings 16 : 7).

The same policy of absolute trust in Yahweh and of withdrawal from all entangling alliances with neighbouring political powers was adhered to by Isaiah throughout his life. When Ashdod, Edom, Moab, and Egypt united in 713-711 B. C. to throw off the yoke of Sargon of Assyria, Isaiah in the most dramatic fashion (Isaiah 20) sought to restrain the government of Judah from joining in the undertaking, but in vain. From 720 to 711 B. C. Sargon was beset by foes on every hand; Elam on the east, Babylon on the south, Urartu and the neighbouring peoples from the upper Mediterranean to the shores of Lake Urumia on the north, and Syria-Palestine with Egypt and Arabia on the west and south. There seemed to be every prospect of success in the attempt to overthrow the world oppressor, and Judah naturally wished to co-operate. But Sargon triumphed over all his foes, shaking

them off one after another, like a lion beset by curs. Isaiah's policy of non-interference and trust in Yahweh was splendidly vindicated. The sermons in 29 : 6-9; 30 : 1-17; and 31 : 1-9 show that he did not waver but still insistently proclaimed the same message in connection with the plots and counter-plots culminating in Sennacherib's invasion.

By returning and rest shall ye be saved;  
In quietness and confidence shall be your  
strength (30 : 15).

Here, again, the progress of events justified Isaiah as over against his opponents who trusted in Egypt to deliver them.

The prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, constitutes another example of prophetic faith. Contemplating the invasion of Sennacherib, he proclaimed:

Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be  
plowed as a field,  
And Jerusalem will become heaps, and the  
mountain of the house a wooded height.

This was an utterance of faith to the point of daring. No prophet yet had ventured to conceive of Yahweh as dissociated from his people Israel. The future of Yahwism was in Israel's hands. Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah could contemplate the fall of Samaria with some degree of equanimity, for Judah remained as the representative of Yahweh. By 701 B. C. Samaria was gone and Jerusalem was tottering. Could Yahweh survive should Jerusalem fall? With the temple desecrated or destroyed and the priesthood decimated and scattered, what was to become of the established institutions of religion? Could Yahwism survive the shock? Micah with unshrinking faith proclaimed Yahweh as superior to and independent of his city, his temple, and his people. It was a faith that stopped at nothing.

In days when gods measured their strength over against one another upon the field of battle and a god's power was

estimated in terms of the success he brought to his people, such faith as that of the prophets of Israel becomes of extraordinary significance. At a time when Judah was reduced to its lowest terms, being under the heavy yoke of a foreign oppression and deprived of native King, when Yahweh did not have a foot of land that he could call his own, a prophet with triumphant faith could say (Hab. 2 : 14):

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the  
glory of Yahweh,  
Like the waters which cover the sea.

Such faith survived shock after shock. It thrived upon misfortunes. The whole history of the Messianic idea is an illustration of this. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." But the prophet's faith fed upon its disappointments. The darker the outlook became for political dominance, the brighter did the prophet's pictures of the golden age become.

Driven from one vantage-point, he took refuge upon a higher one and continued to pour forth pæans of triumphant faith for the encouragement of his stricken people. Never was faith more severely tried, and never was it more splendidly vindicated.

It is generally conceded that the greatest contribution made to religion by the prophet was in the realm of ethics. When this topic comes to mind we at once think of such utterances as these:

I hate, I despise your feasts,  
And I take no delight in your festivals.  
Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings  
and meat-offerings, I do not accept them:  
Nor do I regard the peace offerings of your fat  
beasts.

Take away from me the noise of your songs:  
For I will not hear the melody of thy harps.  
But let justice roll down like waters,  
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

(Amos 5 : 21-24.)

Wash you, make you clean;  
Put away the evil of your doings from my eyes;  
Cease to do evil; learn to do good;



Seek out justice; set right the oppressor;  
Judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.  
(Isaiah 1 : 16-17.)

Wherewithal shall I come before Yahweh,  
And bow myself before the God of Heaven?  
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,  
With calves a year old?  
Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams,  
With tens of thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
It has been told thee, O man, what is good.  
Yea, what does Yahweh seek from thee  
But to do justice and love kindness,  
And walk humbly with thy God?  
(Micah 6 : 6-8.)

What was the prophetic contribution in the sphere of ethics? Surely men had not had to wait for the prophets to tell them that it was wrong to lie, to steal, to cheat, to murder, and the like? As a matter of fact, these things were condemned by the moral conscience of ancient Babylonia, as witnessed by the Code of Hammurabi (2123-2081 B. C.), and also by that of old Egypt as shown

by the "negative confession" in the Book of the Dead. These precepts of Babylonia and Egypt antedate Moses and the prophets by centuries. Hence the prophets were not the discoverers of ethical principles to any great extent. Their service was rather in the finding of new applications for old truths and pre-eminently in the exaltation of ethics to its rightful place in the scheme of things. The rest of the Semitic world was not without ethics; nor was there a sharp differentiation between ethics and religion, as has sometimes been maintained. All the ethics in existence was under the protection of the gods. But the prophet of Israel made ethics the supreme concern of Yahweh. Elsewhere ethics was only one among many interests equally dear to the Deity; in Israel ethics was Yahweh's dominant interest. The priests of Babylon, for example, attributed the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus to the wrath of the gods, even as

the prophets of Israel made Yahweh's anger responsible for the fall of Jerusalem. But, whereas the anger of the Babylonian gods was accounted for by the fact that Nabonidus had not taken care of the shrines and provided for the maintenance of the regular offerings,<sup>1</sup> the anger of Yahweh was aroused by the fact that the moral law was violated on every hand; see, *e. g.*, Jer. 7 : 1-15.

This difference is a very significant one, and it is one that marks off the prophet not merely from non-Hebrew religious leaders but also from the great mass of the leaders of his own people. The priests never gave to ethics that pre-eminence assigned to it by the prophet. The failure to do so evinced a lack of proper appreciation of the ethical as over against the ritual. He who values glass equally with diamonds has no adequate appreciation of dia-

<sup>1</sup> See Cyrus Cylinder, a translation of which may be seen in R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (1913), pp. 380-4.

monds. It is the glory of the prophet at his best that he allowed nothing to share the place that belonged of right to ethics alone. He enthroned ethics in the very heart of Yahweh and thus made Yahweh the God of the universe. Ethics knows no national or racial bounds; sooner or later it inevitably breaks all such restraints. The god who follows the interests of ethics wherever they may lead him is ultimately compelled to make all mankind his province. Along this path the prophets of Israel finally arrived at a monotheistic conception of God. This was not a philosophical or a speculative but an ethical monotheism. For that reason it did not remain, as in Babylonia and in Egypt, the esoteric religion of that select few who were able by virtue of their ability and training to grasp it mentally and appreciate it; but it became at last the religion of the masses. For all men appreciate justice and can understand a just God; and such

a God kindles a contagious enthusiasm among his worshippers which makes other men eager to hear about him. Thus the monotheism of Israel was not still-born, but grew in scope and power with each succeeding generation.

This fact suggests another characteristic of the religion of the prophet that is of great importance. It was not static but dynamic. It was not a given system of thought or standard of life but life itself. It was an ever growing, expanding, and conquering force. Consequently we have a right to speak of the history of the religion of the prophet. His religion changed from generation to generation with the ever-changing environment. It could not stand still; it must move forward or perish. The fact of progress is easily shown. The religion of the earlier prophets is represented by such scenes as the following: Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh and verily thought that he was doing

God service (I Sam. 15 : 33). Samuel offered a sucking lamb on Yahweh's altar for the purpose of securing Yahweh's aid in the ensuing battle (I Sam. 7 : 9 ff.). God told David to build an altar on Araunah's thrashing-floor, and the offering there made by David was regarded as responsible for the cessation of the death-dealing pestilence (II Sam. 24 : 18, 25). Elijah fled from his people and withdrew to Horeb in order to get nearer to Yahweh, with whom that mountain was intimately associated. Micaiah ben Imlah thought of Yahweh as deliberately sending a lying spirit to mislead the prophetic counsellors of Ahab. One old prophet in the days of Jeroboam I lies to another prophet in order to bring the latter to his death, and, notwithstanding that, was credited with a subsequent revelation from Yahweh (I Kings 13 : 18-20).

In marked contrast with such primitive conceptions as these we find the

ideas and ideals of later prophets. Amos, with a god-idea that is already transcending national and geographic limits, says:

Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me,  
O children of Israel? It is the oracle of Yahweh.  
Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt,  
And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians  
from Kir? (Amos 9 : 7; cf. 9 : 3.)

The great unknown prophet of the exile abounds in statements of the omnipotence and universality of Yahweh, *e. g.*:

Thus says the God Yahweh,  
He who created the heavens and stretched them  
forth;  
Who spread abroad the earth with its products;  
Who gives breath to the people upon it,  
And spirit to those who walk thereon.  
(Isaiah 42 : 5; cf. 40 : 12 ff.; 45 : 21-23.)

The same prophet furnishes a splendid contrast to the narrow and particularistic spirit of earlier times when he repre-

sents the Servant of Yahweh, which is Israel, as saying:

And now Yahweh, who formed me from the womb  
to be his Servant, says  
That he will bring Jacob back to him and that  
Israel shall be gathered to him. . . .  
Moreover he says, Since thou art my Servant, it  
is too slight a thing  
That I should raise up the tribes of Jacob and re-  
store the preserved of Israel;  
And so I will set thee to be the light of the nations,  
That my deliverance may be to the end of the  
earth. (Isaiah 49 : 5, 6.)

In contrast with the earlier emphasis upon sacrifice, the later prophets are always minimising it and exalting ethical and social duties, *e. g.*, Amos 5 : 25; Jer. 7 : 22; Micah 6 : 6-8. Lying, which is done with Yahweh's approval by early prophets, is unsparingly denounced by later ones: Hosea 4 : 2; Micah 2 : 11; Isaiah 9 : 15; Jer. 9 : 3; Zeph. 3 : 13.

The prophet was able to make progress of this sort in part because he always faced forward. He was in no sense tied



to the past. He appreciated his nation's past and drew largely upon the experience of the past for guidance and inspiration. But he refused to allow it to paralyse his own initiative. He stood upon the solid achievement of the past and reached upward to higher and better things. He did not fear to criticise the past when that seemed necessary.

He unhesitatingly discarded outworn interpretations and dogmas and made for himself new ones at need. Ahijah the Shilonite and his associates supported Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, in his revolt; Hosea seems to have looked back upon that transaction as a mistake and later writers longed for the healing of the schism (Isaiah 11 : 13-14). Early prophets were fully satisfied with the conception of social solidarity. Ezekiel, seeing the failure of this dogma to meet the needs of the day, formulated the doctrine of individual responsibility to God (see pp. 168 *ff.*). So from age to age the

prophet moved onward and upward, with face ever toward the light, reverent toward the old truth, but hospitable toward the new.

It follows, as a matter of course, that the religion of the prophet was not a gift, nor even an inheritance, but rather an achievement. That which did come as a heritage from the past was re-melted and refined in the forge of his own experience and welded with the new until the whole constituted a new product. The source of the prophet's religious creations was in large measure the life of his own age. His knowledge of the past was limited to a few legends and traditions, some of them in written form but more of them unwritten. He had no comprehensive library. He had no Bible. He was unconsciously helping in the task of making the Bible. He was thus limited in his range of materials for preaching to the resources of his own mind and heart and to the social and

political movements of his day. In the very nature of the case he had no authority from the past pointing out to him clearly the way he should take in the present. The responsibility for the moral and religious leadership of Israel rested heavily upon his shoulders. New and perplexing problems in the sphere of morals and religion were ever arising. He had no patent or ready-made solution for them. Each had to be faced and wrestled with *as it appeared*. Conflicting voices were from time to time calling out: "This is the way; walk ye in it." On his knees before his God he struggled and agonised for the light precisely as his modern successors must do. As he fought his way through darkness to victory his religion grew in compass and in power. He worked for his religion and worked hard. He rang the changes, as all great souls must, on doubt, faith, despair, hope, success, failure, joy, and sorrow. Thus he made his

religion out of the stuff of his daily observation and experience.

The task of the prophet was to interpret the world as he saw it in terms of his religion. The questions he asked himself in the presence of any given condition or set of conditions were: What does this mean for religion? How is this to be fitted in with the conviction that Yahweh loves his people and works for their good? What is Yahweh saying through this experience to his people? Such questions as these were not always easy of answer even for a prophet. The book of Habbakuk reveals a prophet struggling with Yahweh for an answer and not satisfied till he has thought the problem through to the end. We do the prophets an injustice if we think of them as in any sense excused from the toil and trial that beset the path of religiously minded men to-day. As a matter of fact, they had far less illumination upon the pathway of life than

the man of the present day has at his disposal. They were forced to live by faith and not by sight. Yet, with a sense of certainty that compels admiration and a degree of accuracy that challenges comparison, they came forward time and again in the midst of most obscure and trying situations with their "thus saith Yahweh."

The prophetic religion was thus kept in constant touch with the developing life of the nation. But that national life was continuously involved in the most intimate way with the mighty currents of the larger world life around it. Hence the religion was made in the full light of world history. It grew as the mind of Israel grew. It laid hold upon the great world movements of the time and claimed them for itself and for its God. The whole psychic life of Israel moved forward as a unit. There was no gap between the secular and the religious; but they kept even step in the march of

progress. Thus, so long as the prophets directed the course of Israel's religious life there was no thought of religion being left behind in the general forward movement. The prophetic religion was always fully up to date.

The task of the prophets is not yet done. Nor is it likely ever to be completed. They have much to teach the successive generations of mankind. Not that their ideas will always be found adequate to modern needs; for they themselves would have been the last to expect permanency for their utterances. Theirs was the world-view of their day. The modern scientific mind cannot accept that. The world-view of to-day is separated from that of the prophets by centuries of study and experience. But the prophets' religious ideas fitted their world. Many of them are out of place in the world-view of to-day. But their attitude toward God and his world and their way of working out their own and

their contemporaries' religious salvation will always be full of instruction and inspiration to him who reads the record of their work aright. He who would slavishly seek to imitate them would totally misunderstand their spirit. It is for the modern prophet rather to face the facts of life with open eye, to read the message of God to the age as it is revealed in those facts and processes, and to surrender himself in the full assurance of faith to the task of declaring and interpreting that message to his fellow men. So will prophecy live again and religion once more become a quickening power upon the minds of men.





## APPENDIX

### A LIST OF BOOKS FOR THE GENERAL READER

#### 1. ON PROPHECY

- C. H. Cornill, *The Prophets of Israel*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co. 1901. \$1.00.
- L. W. Batten, *The Hebrew Prophet*. New York: Macmillan. 1905. \$1.50.
- A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*. New York: Macmillan. 1892. \$1.50.
- W. R. Smith, *The Prophets of Israel and Their Place in History to the Close of the Eighth Century B. C.* New edition, with Introduction by T. K. Cheyne. London: A. & C. Black. 1896. 10s. 6d.
- A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*. New York: Scribners. 1904. \$3.50.
- W. H. Bennett, *The Religion of the Post-Exilic Prophets*. New York: Scribners. 1907. \$2.00.
- Georgia L. Chamberlin, *The Hebrew Prophets, or Patriots and Leaders of Israel*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1914. \$1.25.
- Moses Battenwieser, *The Prophets of Israel from the Eighth to the Fifth Century—Their Faith and Their Message*. New York: Macmillan. 1914. \$2.00.
- A. C. Knudson, *The Beacon Lights of Prophecy. An Interpretation of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah*. New York: Eaton & Mains. 1914. \$1.25.
- G. C. Joyce, *The Inspiration of Prophecy. An Essay in the Psychology of Revelation*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1910. \$1.40.

- A. C. Welch, *The Religion of Israel under the Kingdom*. New York: Scribners. 1912. \$3.00.  
K. Budde, *The Religion of Israel to the Exile*. New York: Putnams. 1899. \$1.50.  
H. P. Smith, *The Religion of Israel. An Historical Study*. New York: Scribners. 1914. \$2.50.  
J. F. McCurdy, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*. New edition. New York: Macmillan. 1911. \$3.00.

## 2. ON LITERATURE

- S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. Revised edition. New York: Scribners. 1914. \$2.50.  
G. B. Gray, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*. New York: Scribners. 1913. 75 cents.  
G. F. Moore, *The Literature of the Old Testament*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1913. 50 cents.  
H. T. Fowler, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel*. New York: Macmillan. 1912. \$2.25.  
C. H. Cornill, *An Introduction to the Canonical Books of the Old Testament*. New York: Putnams. 1907. \$3.00.  
J. E. McFadyen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. New York: Geo. H. Doran. 1905. \$1.75.

## 3. ON HISTORY

- H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*. New York: Scribners. 1903. \$2.50.  
G. W. Wade, *Old Testament History*. New York: Dutton & Co. 1903. \$1.50.  
C. H. Cornill, *History of the People of Israel*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co. 1898. \$1.50.  
C. F. Kent, *History of the Hebrew People and A History of the Jewish People*. 3 vols. New York: Scribners. 1896-9. \$3.75.

- H. R. Hall, *The Ancient History of the Near East*. New York: Macmillan. 1913. \$5.00.
- J. H. Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*. New York: Scribners. 1908. \$1.25.
- G. S. Goodspeed, *A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians*. New York: Scribners. 1902. \$1.25.

## 4. ON ARCHÆOLOGY

- R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*. New York: Eaton & Mains. 1912. \$4.50.
- S. A. B. Mercer, *Extra-Biblical Sources for Hebrew and Jewish History*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1913. \$1.50.
- S. R. Driver, *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press. \$1.00.
- P. S. P. Handcock, *The Latest Light on the Old Testament from the Monuments*. London: Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge. 1913. 6s.
- Ira M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society. 1911. \$1.50.
- J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*. 5 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1906. \$17.00.

## 5. EASY COMMENTARIES ON THE PROPHETS

- The Expositor's Bible*. New York: Geo. H. Doran. Especially the volumes on Isaiah and the Twelve Prophets, by G. Adam Smith.
- The Century Bible*. Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack. Especially the volume on the Minor Prophets, by Driver; those on Jeremiah, by Peake; on Isaiah, by Whitehouse; on Ezekiel, by Lofthouse.
- The Cambridge Bible*. Cambridge: The University Press. Especially the volumes on Joel, Amos, and Daniel, by Driver; those on Micah and Hosea,

by Cheyne; on Isaiah, by Skinner; on Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Ezekiel, by A. B. Davidson.

*The Bible for Home and School.* New York: Macmillan. Only Isaiah, by J. E. McFadyen, and Amos, Hosea, and Micah, by J. M. Powis Smith, are thus far published.

M. G. Glazebrook, *Studies in the Book of Isaiah.* Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1910.

G. W. Wade, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah.* London: Methuen & Co. 1911. 10s. 6d.

S. R. Driver, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.* New York: Geo. H. Doran. 1906. \$1.50.

J. R. Gillies, *Jeremiah, the Man and His Message.* New York: Geo. H. Doran. 1908. \$1.50.

F. C. Eiselen, *The Minor Prophets.* New York: Eaton & Mains. 1907. \$2.00

## 6. BIBLE DICTIONARIES

James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible.* 5 vols. New York: Scribners. 1898-1904. \$6.00 per vol.

James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible.* 1 vol. New York: Scribners. 1909. \$5.00.

M. W. Jacobus, *et al.*, *A Standard Bible Dictionary.* New York: Funk & Wagnalls. 1909. \$6.00.

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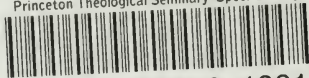
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